

5779 *R.*
*The influence of the Pastoral Office on the Character
examined; with a view, especially, to Mr.
HUME's representation of the spirit of that office,*

A
S E R M O N

Preached before

The **SYNOD** of **ABERDEEN**,

At **ABERDEEN**, April 8, 1760.

K
B Y

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in the year of our Lord 1840



ALEXANDER D. M. A.

Minister of the Gospel

of the Parish of St. Andrew

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TIRUS i. 7. *first Clause.*

A BISHOP MUST BE BLAMELESS, AS THE
STEWARD OF GOD.—

IN forming general conclusions from particular instances, especially when our experience of these instances has not been uniform, great caution is necessary, on every subject, to preserve us from mistakes. But a peculiar degree of caution is necessary in forming general maxims concerning *characters*; because the circumstances on which characters depend, are both more complicated, and more uncertain in their operation, than the causes of *natural effects*. On this account, observations must be made on a very great number of individuals, before we can judge with accuracy concerning the character of the nation or the profession, to which these individuals belong: and even after we have made the most extensive observations, we ought still to remember, that the maxim, which we form, far from being an universal truth, will necessarily be liable to numberless exceptions.

It is however undeniable, that there are few subjects, on which men judge, either more rashly, or more dogmatically, than on the characters both of nations and of particular professions. They impute the faults, which they have observed in a few individuals, to a whole nation or order. They often also embrace the groundless prejudice so closely, that, when they afterwards discover many other individuals, who appear to be free from the blemish, which they had expected to find in them, they suppose them to be tainted with it notwithstanding, and take it for granted, that it would become obvious in proper circumstances.

In no instance has this shameful prejudice been indulged more freely, than in forming a disadvantageous idea of the clergy in general, on account of the vices of some, who have been members of that society. And, because ministers are the public teachers of christianity, the vices imputed to them in a body, without evidence, have been considered as throwing a reflection on the truth or the efficacy of the religion which it is their business to publish. The charge has been commonly enforced by loose and popular declamation, fit to make an impression on the imagination of the thoughtless, and, by consequence, to gain their passions to the party ; but absolutely insufficient to convince the impartial and inquisitive. If there be any difficulty in confuting the accusations, that are commonly brought against our order, and against the
gospel

gospel on our account, it arises, not from the strength of the arguments, by which they are supported, but from the total want of argument.

THE most natural and direct method of proving, that the clergy deserve the disagreeable character, which is sometimes ascribed to them, would doubtless be, to examine the temper and conduct of the several individuals, and to shew, from an intimate knowledge of them, that the majority are really guilty of the vices imputed to the order. A candid enquirer would likewise choose, before he pronounced sentence concerning their character on the whole, to compare them with the individuals of other professions, and to see what proportion the virtues and the vices of the *clergy* bear to those of the *laity*. It will scarce be pretended, that this species of proof has been attempted by those, who are so liberal in their declamations against the vices of the ministers of the gospel.—But though they could produce this proof in its greatest strength, it would still be difficult to shew, that the faults of ministers can be justly charged on the christian religion, to the rules of which, it is manifest, these faults are absolutely contrary. The moral tendency of the doctrines of the gospel; and the purity and sublimity of its precepts, ought always to preserve it free from blame, on account of the vices of any, who profess to believe it. Before these vices be imputed to the gospel, it should certainly be shown,

that there is some doctrine, or precept, or example, recommended in scripture, which gives countenance to them.

BUT though the method of proof, which we have mentioned, be the most natural and direct, upon a subject of this kind, it must be acknowledged, that another species of reasoning may be likewise used. All arguments concerning matter of fact are ultimately founded on experience ; but it is not necessary to have recourse in every argument to experience of instances precisely similar to that which we infer. It is often sufficient, that the present argument be supported by some general maxims, which are clearly deducible from experience. We may conclude that a man, who is intrusted with absolute power, will probably abuse it, not only from instances of tyrants, who have abused it, but also from the more general observation of examples which occur of corruption and insolence in private life. In like manner could it be fairly proved, that there are circumstances essential to the ministerial office, which, according to our general observation of human nature, have a direct and primary tendency to produce certain vices in those who exercise that office ; and should it be inferred from this, that these vices will be characteristic of the order, and that the religion, which institutes the office, is the occasion of them ; we could not justly refuse to admit the inference. This method of proof has been attempted by a late author, in an

Essay

Essay on national characters (a). Declining the direct proof of the vices commonly imputed to the clergy, from

(a) The character, which he draws, is this; 'Tis a trite, but not altogether a false maxim, that "Priests of all religions are the same;" and though the character of the profession will not, in every instance, prevail over the personal character, yet it is sure always to predominate with the greater number. For as Chymists observe, that spirits, when raised to a certain height, are all the same, from whatever materials they be extracted; so these men, being elevated above humanity, acquire a uniform character, which is entirely their own, and which, in my opinion, is, generally speaking, not the most amiable, that is to be met with in human society. It is, in most points, opposite to that of a soldier; as is the way of life, from which it is derived.

THOUGH all mankind have a strong propensity to religion at certain times and in certain dispositions; yet are there few or none, who have it to that degree, and with that constancy, which is requisite to support the character of this profession. It must, therefore, happen, that clergymen, being drawn from the common mass of mankind, as people are to other employments, by the views of profit, the greatest part, though no atheists or freethinkers, will find it necessary, on particular occasions, to feign more devotion than they are, at that time, possess of, and to maintain the appearance of fervour and seriousness, even when jaded with the exercises of their religion, or when they have their minds engaged in the common occupations of life. They must not, like the rest of the world, give scope to their natural movements and sentiments: they must set a guard over their looks and words and actions; and in order to support the veneration paid them by the ignorant vulgar, they must not only keep a remarkable reserve, but must promote the spirit of superstition, by a continued grimace and hypocrisy. This dissimulation often destroys the candour and

from immediate experience, he has drawn a character for them (though he admits of very many exceptions in

ingenuity of their tempers, and makes an irreparable breach in their characters.

It by chance any of them be possess'd of a temper more susceptible of devotion than usual, so that he has but **LITTLE** occasion for hypocrisy to support the character of his profession; it is so natural for him to over-rate this advantage, and to think it atones for every violation of morality, that frequently he is not more virtuous than the hypocrite. And though few dare openly avow these exploded opinions, "that every thing is lawful to the saints, and that they alone have a property in their goods;" yet may we observe, that these principles lurk in every bosom, and represent a zeal for religious observances as so great a merit, that it may compensate for many vices and enormities. This observation is so common, that all prudent men are on their guard, when they meet with any extraordinary appearance of religion; though at the same time they confess, that there are many exceptions to this general rule, and that probity and superstition are far from being incompatible.

MOST men are ambitious; but the ambition of other men may commonly be satisfied, by excelling in their particular profession, and thereby promoting the interests of society. The ambition of the clergy can often be satisfied only by promoting ignorance and superstition, and implicit faith and pious frauds. And having got what Archimedes only wanted (viz. another world, on which he could fix his engines) no wonder they move this world at their pleasure.

MOST men have an over-weening conceit of themselves, but these have a peculiar temptation to that vice, they are regarded with such veneration, and are even deemed sacred, by the ignorant multitude.

MOST men are apt to bear a particular regard for the members of their own profession; but as a lawyer, or physician, or
mer-

in individuals) which is by no means amiable, a character which includes many of the blackest vices in human

merchant does, each of them, follow out his business apart, the interests of these professions are not so closely united as the interests of clergymen of the same religion; where the whole body gains by the veneration paid to their common tenets, and by the suppression of antagonists.

Few men can bear contradiction with patience; but the clergy too often proceed even to a degree of fury on this article; because all their credit and livelihood depend upon the belief which their opinions meet with; and they alone pretend to a divine and supernatural authority, or have any colour for representing their antagonists as impious and profane. The Odium Theologicum, or theological hatred, is noted even to a proverb, and means that degree of rancour which is the most furious and implacable.

Thus many of the vices of human nature are, by fixt moral causes, inflamed in that profession; and though several individuals escape the contagion, yet all wise governments will be on their guard against the attempts of a society, who will for ever combine into one faction, and while it acts as a society, will for ever be actuated by ambition, pride, and a persecuting spirit.

The temper of religion is grave and serious; and this is the character required of priests, which confines them to strict rules of decency, and commonly prevents irregularity and intemperance amongst them. The gaiety, much less the excesses of pleasure, is not permitted in that body; and this virtue is, perhaps, the only one they owe to their profession. In religions, indeed, founded on speculative principles, and where public discourses make a part of religious service, it may also be supposed that the clergy will have a considerable share in the learning of the times; though it is certain, that their taste in clo-

human nature; and he has endeavoured to prove, that this character naturally results from the very genius of the ministerial calling.

THAT

quence will always be better than their skill in reasoning and philosophy. But whoever possesses the other noble virtues of humanity, meekness, and moderation, as very many of them, no doubt, do, is beholden for them to nature or reflection, not to the genius of his calling.* HUME'S *Essays Moral and Political*, Essay 24.

THIS is a representation chiefly of the MORAL character of the clergy; and to that the following discourse is wholly confined. But as an insinuation is likewise made to the disadvantage of their INTELLECTUAL character, it will be proper to remark, that this insinuation is, both of little weight, and, in a great measure, without foundation.—It is of little weight; for taste is more general among all men, than skill in philosophy. A greater number can judge of beauty, than of truth. Many are moved by the eloquence of a discourse, who cannot examine the justness of the reasoning. We meet much oftener with a degree of imagination, and sensibility of temper, sufficient to form a good speaker, than with the penetration which is necessary for investigating the causes of things, and inventing just theories. It can be no reflection on the clergy, that taste is more universal, than philosophical genius, in their profession, as well as in all other professions. Their taste will naturally be better in eloquence, than in other arts, because their office leads them to apply especially to that.—In every sense, in which it can be considered as a reflexion on our order, the insinuation is entirely groundless. Were mankind persuaded, that we are unacquainted with the rules of just reasoning, and only qualified for popular declamation on principles taken for granted without enquiry; this might perhaps incline them to listen to those who

tell

THAT candour, which the gospel recommends, and which ought always to prevail in the heart of a minister

tell them, that the truths of religion, which we teach, are mere fables, destitute of evidence, though we be not possessed of a degree of reason, sufficient for detecting the fallacious arguments produced in support of them; it might prepare them for expecting wonderful discoveries in the writings of infidels, and prejudice them against our vindications of religion. I will not say, that this author made the insinuation with a design to promote this end, because he has not informed us what is his design. But I will say, this end can be really promoted by nothing less, than a proof that the clergy are weak reasoners, in comparison with the rest of mankind; and I will venture to affirm, that neither the nature of their employment, nor experience of their real character, gives reason for representing them in this light. Their profession turns their attention to eloquence, but does not divert it from just reasoning. Their public functions lead them to employ all their powers of persuasion, in inculcating truth and goodness on their hearers; their studies lead them also to examine most questions of importance, to enquire into the abstrusest truths, and to detect the most subtle errors. Corruptions of religion, interwoven with the tenets of a false philosophy, have sometimes retarded the improvement of science; but it is the business of ministers to teach only pure religion; it is a perversion of their office to support corruptions of religion, and the effects of this perversion cannot justly be imputed to the genuine spirit of the office. In fact, the clergy have never been remarkably defective in the knowledge of philosophy. There have been periods, in which the philosophy of the times was almost wholly confined to them. When the scholastic philosophy prevailed universally, they discovered as great subtlety, as men of other professions. As great a proportion of the clergy, as of any other class, have excelled in the knowledge, both of

ster of the gospel, forbids me to attempt detracting from the real merit or abilities of this author. He is possessed of a very considerable share of genius and penetration. This will gain him attention from the inquisitive; and will render his reasonings on every subject more specious than those of many others, and on that account more dangerous, when, at any time, he happens to mistake. Is it not, then, worth while, my reverend fathers and brethren, to enquire whether his charge be just? Will it be unsuitable to the present occasion, to examine fairly and impartially, what is the natural influence of the ministerial office upon the characters of those who exercise it?

THE ungainly portrait, that has been drawn for the ministers of the gospel, suggested this investigation to my thoughts. When I found myself obliged, by the authority of my superiors, to appear in this place, on the present occasion, I willingly chose this subject. It affords me an opportunity of considering the ministerial character and office, in a point of view, in which they have not been frequently regarded. It frees me

nature, and of the human mind. It is natural for freethinkers to reckon the reasonings of the clergy, concerning religion, weak and inconclusive, because they are contradictory to their own; but we are not afraid to desire the world to compare the writings of men of our order, with those of the most admired infidels, in respect either of the truth of the principles, from which they argue, or of the strength and closeness of the arguments,

from

from the necessity of even *seeming* to give directions to those, from whom it becomes me rather to receive instruction; for the very nature of the design confines me to enquiry. At the same time it will appear, that the enquiry is far from being merely speculative, or unimproving, and that it has, on the contrary, the most intimate connexion with practice. I enter on it, with a sincere desire to vindicate our sacred function from reproach; and will conduct it with an eye especially to that author, to whom I have referred already. Priests, of the temper which he describes, would unite in the bitterest invectives against an antagonist, who has attacked the whole body of the clergy, in a manner so unreserved. But that is not the temper of the ministers of Jesus Christ. I know well, that my reverend hearers would not excuse me, if I made the least approach to rancour, or unbecoming warmth against him, if I opposed him in any other spirit than *the spirit of meekness*, (b) or if I considered my subject in any other manner, than with that impartiality which will be observed by those who seek only to discover truth.

THE apostle Paul says in my text, *A bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God.* It will be evident that these words lead naturally to the proposed enquiry, if we attend to the manner in which they are introduced, especially if we consider, at the same time, the import of the words themselves in the ori-

(b) Gal. vi. 1.

ginal. The apostle reminds *Titus*, *ver. 5.* that he had left him in *Crete* for this purpose, that he might ordain elders or presbyters in every city; men blameless, free not only from gross and scandalous wickedness, but from every species of vice; for the word here used has a respect to the judgment of God, and not merely to the sentiments of men. (c) In my text he shows, that when he required presbyters to be blameless, he enjoined only what the very nature of their office demands. A presbyter is, by his office, *a bishop*, that is, *an overseer*; and, according to the language of the new testament, as appears from the only place where the term is used in such a way, that its meaning can be precisely determined, (d) *an overseer of all the flock of the church of God*. On this account, he *must be blameless*: steady and universal virtue, as far as it can be attained by human nature, is a qualification absolutely necessary for the exercise of his office. To render the necessity of this character still more evident, the apostle adds, *as the steward of God*. He represents the christian church as the family of God, and informs us, that ministers are appointed to dispense, to the several members of it, that spiritual food, by which they may be nourished to eternal life. As he elsewhere characterizes them more explicitly, they are *stewards of the mysteries of God*, (e) teachers, not of their own opinions, but of the doctrines of the

(c) See 1 Cor. i. 22. Col. i. 22. (d) Acts xx. 28.

(e) 1 Cor. iv. 1.

christian revelation. The import of the text is, therefore, plainly this ; ‘ the most exalted and blameless virtue is requisite, from the very nature of their office, in those whose business it is to teach religion, and to oversee the morals of the people.’ Does not this assertion of the apostle imply, that the ministerial office has a tendency upon the whole to form a good and virtuous character ? Could his maxim be true, if that very office had an unalterable tendency to inflame many of the basest vices of human nature, and to produce a character which every good man must regard with indignation ? May not we, then, with sufficient propriety, take occasion from this text to enquire, what is that temper which our employment, as ministers of the gospel, tends to cultivate in our souls ?

In prosecuting this subject, I will, *first*, enquire how far a tendency in the ministerial office, to form a character in some respects disagreeable, or even a character exposed to the danger of becoming vicious, could reasonably affect either the credit of that office, or the excellence of the christian religion, in which the office is founded.

Secondly, I will enquire, whether that character, which the ministerial office tends to form, be virtuous or vicious on the whole.

Thirdly, I will enquire, how far this office has, really, a tendency to produce, or to inflame those particular

ticular vices, which some have represented as characteristic of our order.

I. *First*, I WILL enquire, how far a tendency in the ministerial office, to form a character in some respects disagreeable, or a character exposed to the danger of becoming vicious, could reasonably affect either the credit of that office, or the excellence of the christian religion.

It is not unusual to draw from an argument, a conclusion totally different from that which it really proves; and, by means of the ambiguity of words, or the confusion of men's ideas, the fallacy often escapes detection, and it is taken for granted that a proposition is proved, for which, in fact, there has not been a single argument proposed. Attempts have been sometimes made to shew that the occupation of ministers tends to prevent their acquiring that artificial polish, which adds gracefulness to the behaviour of the higher ranks of mankind: and when plausible evidence for this trivial charge has been produced, men have triumphed, as if they had demonstrated a very different proposition, that the character of our profession is positively disagreeable, contemptible or ridiculous. In like manner, when men have produced such arguments as seem to make it probable, that the turn of character and manners, which is promoted by the genius of the ministerial office, will be unfit to engage the *liking* of the generality, or will be *disagreeable*

agreeable in some situations, they have taken it for granted, that these arguments prove with equal force, that this turn of character and manners is likewise positively *vicious*, and unfit to gain the inward *esteem*, or the moral *approbation* of men.

A MODERATE degree of understanding might preserve a person from being deceived by sophisms so palpable. But persons of good understanding are often not so ready to exert a very small degree of reflection, as to receive every thing, without examination, which can gratify their own pride, or afford them mirth, by representing others as proper objects of contempt or ridicule. For this reason, these arguments, or others equally inconclusive, have in fact occasioned a great part of the contempt, which has been poured out upon the clergy. It will not, therefore, be unnecessary to remark, though the remark be extremely obvious, that a character not only may be agreeable, when many agreeable qualities are wanting in it, because the mere absence of them gives no positive disgust; but also may be really disagreeable, or unfit to engage a general liking, and yet be so far from vicious, that it shall, on the contrary, command the moral approbation, and force the good opinion, and even the veneration of mankind.

As characters and actions may be considered in various lights, they may gratify a spectator, by sentiments totally distinct and different. These sentiments
are

are very apt to be confounded, because they are all agreeable ; but every man, who desires to think with accuracy, must be at pains to preserve them separate. A *liking* to a character is very different from the *approbation* or *esteem* of it. The former sentiment is excited chiefly by the more trivial accomplishments of the man ; the latter, only by such as are important. The qualities, which most effectually engage the liking of the generality, are of too low an order to be regarded as being even a-kin to the moral virtues : nay, there are some vices, which, because they diffuse a certain ease, and gaiety, and sprightliness over the temper and behaviour, are very apt to obtain the liking even of those, in whom a moment of reflection produces abhorrence of their baseness. But it is only solid virtue, rooted deep in the temper, and exerted regularly in the conduct, that can either gain or preserve the real inward approbation and esteem of mankind. It likewise deserves to be remarked, that a man's own turn of character has great influence in determining the objects of his liking, who will be those chiefly, whose manners resemble his own ; and therefore this sentiment will be variable and precarious. Approbation is more permanent and universal, and less dependent on the peculiarities of temper ; it is often bestowed unwillingly by men, on those, to whom their own consciences tell them, to their anguish, that themselves bear no similitude.

SUPPOSE now, my fathers and brethren, that some person should assert, in writing or in conversation,
that

that our office deprives us of opportunities for acquiring that exterior polish of manners, which is very acceptable to the generality, and indeed graceful in itself. This is really the whole amount of some of those superficial reflexions, which are often thrown out against us. The author, whom we have principally in our eye, does not expressly urge this insignificant accusation; yet he seems to insinuate, not only that we are obnoxious to it, but also that it doth detract from the credit of our office; for he mentions good breeding and openness of behaviour, as one of the amiable qualities which enter into the character of a soldier, and are naturally derived from his way of life; and he tells us that the character of a clergyman, as well as his way of life, is, in most points, opposite to that of a soldier.—Need we be much concerned to enquire, whether the charge be true or false? If we should acknowledge it, do you think, that either the importance of our office, or the excellence of our religion, would suffer by the acknowledgement? Nay, might not the ministerial character be, nevertheless, agreeable, and fit to procure even the liking of the generality? For might not it contain those amiable inward qualities, of which external politeness is only either the expression, or the mimicry, and from which openness and ease of behaviour deriveth all its merit?

SUPPOSE again, that it shou'd be asserted, that the character which naturally results from our office, is
very

very generally *disagreeable* ; must we take it for granted immediately, that this character is *vicious* ? May not we reasonably ask, before we admit this conclusion, to whom, and in what particular manner, it is disagreeable ? It is asserted by others, and it is not dissembled by ourselves, that our office tends to form us to a grave and serious temper, that it discourages the gaiety of pleasure, and unthinking levity of behaviour, that it confines us to strict rules of decency, that it leads us to set a guard over our looks, and words, and actions, and restrains us from giving scope to our natural movements and sentiments, whenever they are either sinful or unbecoming.—I do not know but there are some particular seasons, at which the generality would dislike a man of this character, and shun his company. But it would be only when they were disposed to exceed the limits of right and innocence. And could it be inferred, from his being disagreeable to them in this situation, that his character is vicious, or even that they, who dislike him, do not really approve and esteem him notwithstanding ? I doubt not but a person of the character, which we have described, will be, in all situations, disagreeable to many. He bears no resemblance, in his manners, to the gay, the dissipated, and the voluptuous ; and his presence would lay them under an uneasy restraint. They will always *dislike* him : but is it certain, that even they will always disapprove him ? Or if they should, would it be of mighty consequence ? For
could

could he be more agreeable to them, without becoming less virtuous? Admit, then, that our office naturally produces a turn of character, which is disagreeable in some respects: will either the credit of that office, or the excellence of our religion, suffer by this charge, if we be able to vindicate our calling from a temper, that is really vicious, or morally evil?

FARTHER, brethren, is it absolutely certain, that every tendency in the ministerial function, to produce some real vices in those who exercise it, will necessarily detract from its credit, or be inconsistent with the perfect purity of the gospel? An assertion or insinuation of this nature is plausible indeed: yet it may be proved, that it ought not to be admitted, but under several limitations.—Were it the direct, and primary tendency of our profession, to form a vicious character, or to inflame some heinous vices, this would certainly reflect dishonour on it. This would render ours an unlawful calling, because we could not exercise it, without doing what is wrong. Were there, for instance, any essential part of our office, which we could not execute, without imposing *cunningly devised fables (f)* on the credulity of mankind, or fostering a spirit of superstition among them, or offering violence to their consciences, our employment would be so far absolutely immoral. This would also reflect dishonour on our religion; for that religion could not

(f) 2 Pet. 1. 16.

be true, or holy, or divine, which it were impossible to teach without committing sin. Let it be clearly proved, that something unlawful must *necessarily* be practised in teaching the doctrines, or inculcating the duties of genuine, *uncorrupted christianity*:—by this, indeed, but by nothing less than this, our office and our religion will be exposed to censure.

If any person should discover that, tho' our office tend *primarily* to form and improve a virtuous character, it has a remote and *secondary* tendency to produce vicious dispositions, in those who resist its original impulse; we may give him liberty to avail himself of the discovery, as much as he can with reason. The amount of the discovery is only this, that the best things may be abused, that what is naturally calculated for the worthiest purpose may be perverted, and, after it is perverted, rendered subservient to an unworthy and contrary end. This is, indeed, an universal truth. Reason is a noble faculty, implanted in our nature, on purpose to enable us to distinguish truth from falsehood: but a superior degree of reason has been often employed to disguise plain truths, and to render errors plausible. Natural affection is an amiable instinct, designed to prompt the parent, to provide for the helpless infant, and to submit to all the fatigues, which may be necessary for instilling knowledge and virtue into the opening mind: yet it frequently degenerates into a vicious fondness, which occasions the death, or prevents

prevents the education of the child. The primary end of ingenuous shame and regard to reputation plainly is the prevention of infamous vices : but does not this very principle often lead men to commit one act of wickedness in order to conceal another, which they have already perpetrated in secret? In a word, nothing can have so strong a tendency to promote a good end, but it may be perverted to serve a bad, or even a contrary purpose. Are we, then, to judge of things, by their primary and essential tendency, or by that accidental direction, which they acquire when they have been abused? By the former, certainly. If it is not sufficient, that the primary tendency of a thing be good, if it is necessary likewise, that it be incapable of perversion or abuse; there will be nothing good or wise in art or nature; there will be no situation or employment in the world safe or lawful, for there is none, from which men may not take occasion to fall into vicious conduct. And is it fair or reasonable to insist, that more is requisite for the vindication of the pastoral office, than of any thing besides? Are those vices to be charged on the office, which spring only from the abuse of it? Are they not rather to be imputed solely to the faults of individuals?

WHEN therefore any person asserts, that there are circumstances in the pastoral office, which tend to inflame any particular vice, it is incumbent on him to distinguish carefully between the primary and the accidental

cidental tendency of these circumstances. If the tendency be but accidental, to urge it to the disadvantage of the office, is, either inadvertently or artfully, to confound things totally distinct, and thus to render a falsehood plausible, or to give a harmless truth an unfavourable aspect: it is like hurting a man's reputation by an insinuation, which will very probably be misunderstood, and which could do no hurt, except it were misunderstood.

It has been said, that there are certain vices, of which ministers are often guilty, and into which they are led by their profession. Suppose it were alledged, as an instance of this, that when ministers are conscious of their wanting some virtue, which the decorum of their character requires, they are apt to affect the outward appearance of that virtue. Such ministers are, no doubt, guilty of hypocrisy. It may be affirmed too, in some sense, that their profession is the occasion of this hypocrisy; because their being conscious that their profession requires the virtue, which they affect, is their motive in making false pretences to it. But is it not plain that, in this case, the spirit of the office leads them *naturally*, not to *affect* the virtue, but really to *cultivate* it? It can be said to lead to hypocrisy, only by *accident*, by being perverted from its original and proper aim: And its being thus perverted, far from implying that it has an immortal tendency,

tendency, sets the strength of its tendency to virtue in the clearest light ; for it shows, that the ministerial office prompts men so powerfully to the culture of virtue, that even they who resist its impulse, and over whom it has the least power, must palliate their want of real virtue, to themselves and others, by an hypocritical show of goodness.

THERE are some vices, which bear a general resemblance to certain virtues : superstition, for instance, mimics piety ; rancour calls itself zeal ; moroseness would pass for a serious temper. Men of all professions often indulge the vice, while they flatter themselves that they are cultivating the virtue, for which it is mistaken. We impute it to their weakness, and pity their want of true moral discernment. Suppose that a clergymen should in like manner substitute some specious vice in the place of a particular virtue, which eminently suits the genius of his profession : ought we to impute this vice to the profession ? Must not we, on the contrary, impute it wholly to the infirmity of the individual, and to the general deceitfulness of sin ? If this can account for similar instances among other ranks of men, with what colour of reason can we urge the vice, as a proof of an immoral tendency in the ministerial calling ?

THERE are certain ends naturally desirable to mankind, in whatever station they be placed. Every sta-

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tion furnishes a man with *lawful* means of promoting these ends ; but in every station, a man has it likewise in his power to pursue them by *unlawful* means.—— Besides those ends, which we may *innocent*ly aim at, there are others, which it is *wrong* to pursue, but which the corrupt affections of mankind will often lead them to pursue ; and different wrong ends will be most likely to attract different classes of men.—— In the present degenerate state of mankind, many will pursue unlawful ends, or seek to promote such ends as are lawful in themselves, by unjustifiable means. They have the vicious bent, which occasions this, independent of their particular profession ; but it determines the form, which the vice assumes. It is in this way that every station and profession has its peculiar temptations, and exposes those, who occupy it, to peculiar dangers.——Now suppose that the station, in which ministers are placed, has, in like manner, its peculiar temptations ; that ministers may find in their employment unlawful means of attaining a lawful end, or that they may render their sacred functions subservient to a wrong end: is this any more than happens in other professions ? If this can expose the ministry to censure, must it not equally expose every other occupation ? Can it, then, be fairly urged to the disadvantage of this one office, in comparison with others ? If this tendency to vice be but secondary and accidental in other callings, must it not be esteemed such also in our vocation ? If, in other employments,

ployments, the fault be chargeable only on the individuals, who are guilty, pray, why should not individual clergymen likewise be alone answerable for yielding to the temptations, which arise from their peculiar business?—The office of a clergyman is founded in the gospel: but can the gospel be blamed, because this office has its peculiar temptations? Before you determine that it can, stop for a moment, and observe the consequences. Other stations are appointed in the course of ordinary providence; and their peculiar temptations would reflect the same dishonour upon it. If the common temptations of life be not sufficient to overturn the belief of a God and a providence, those, which are peculiar to the pastoral office, cannot affect the truth or the excellence of the gospel. Let none therefore throw blame on the christian ministry, on account of its supplying some temptations to vice, or on the gospel, because it has established an office, which is liable to abuse, but those who have already embraced atheism, and denied the constitution of the world to be wise and good.—Mankind are at present, by the universal appointment of God, in a state of trial and exercise. There is no circumstance in life, but gives us opportunities of acting either virtuously or viciously. It is only by putting it in our power to act viciously, if we choose, that any situation can exercise or improve our virtuous affections. Exercise is afforded to our temper, not only by the general circumstances of life, common to all men, but likewise by the peculiar circumstances of

particular professions. There are peculiar circumstances in the ministerial office, as well as in every other, which may give exercise to our virtues, and improve them, but may likewise, as is indeed a necessary consequence, prove occasions of vice. To assert this is only to say, that ministers of the gospel are in a state of probation and discipline, in the same sense as other men, that their employment, as well as other employments, contains circumstances fit to draw out virtuous principles, and to give them exercise : and this surely can derogate nothing from the excellence of their office.

BUT suppose that the vices of a wicked minister rise higher, in particular instances, and become more atrocious than those of others : this is so far from necessarily implying an immoral tendency in his office, that, on the contrary, it may really proceed from the strength of its virtuous tendency ; for the greater the advantages, which this office affords for virtuous practice, the greater will be the depravity necessary for abusing them, and the more heinous and inveterate the corruption, which will spring from the abuse. —As the same vicious principle may assume different forms, and be exerted in different ways, some forms and exertions of it are often more detestible and pernicious than others. If, then, some vicious principle should assume its blackest form, in the practice of a clergyman, who fosters it ; and if it should appear to
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be determined to that form, by the circumstances of his occupation ; can we arraign the spirit of his office on this account ? This were to judge of that office only by the abuse of it. But do not all men admit it for a maxim, that those things are generally the best in themselves, the corruption of which is the worst ?

SUPPOSE again, that the employment of a minister contains circumstances, which will lead to vicious conduct, if the greatest caution be not exercised : this would not necessarily prove even that vice will be more common among ministers than among other ranks of men ; much less would it prove, that the spirit of the office is, on the whole, friendly to vice ; for it may contain other circumstances, which prompt strongly to exert the necessary caution, to resist the importunities of vice, and to cultivate every virtue. The ministerial office may, from its being abused and perverted, by the weakness or corruption of those who exercise it, or from various circumstances in this state of probation, in which it is to be executed, supply temptations, which have a direct and powerful tendency to excite a passion or inclination, whose indulgence will lead the negligent into vicious conduct. If this could throw a reflexion on the spirit of that office, or on the christian religion, which has instituted it, how could we vindicate the ordinary situations, in which God places us, or the general plan of his providence towards us in the present world ? Many ob-

jects in nature excite passions, which crave gratification often when it is vicious to gratify them. Were man formed for following thoughtlessly the present inclination, these objects would infallibly lead him into vice. But we must take the whole of human nature into the account; man is endued with a moral principle, a principle of reflection, whose proper business it is, to restrain inclination, whenever it cannot be indulged lawfully. His state is suited to his whole nature. The temptations of life are designed to give him opportunities of exerting reflection, of acting with moral attention to his conduct, and are fit to strengthen, by this means, the principle of reflection, and improve a habit of self-government, which is the great security of virtue. They who will not exercise reflection, and employ care, in controuling their inclinations, fall before temptations, thro' their own fault, are hardened in vice by means of them, and thus render them subservient to a contrary end, from that which God has designed and fitted them to answer. This is the general constitution of the world, yet the Creator is wise, and good, and perfect. The office of a christian minister, in like manner, supplies temptations, with which many comply, and which it requires a great degree of care and attention to resist; yet that office may be designed for the virtuous improvement of those who occupy it, its spirit may tend strongly to promote that improvement; and the religion, which institutes that office, may be holy and
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divine, for it is indeed analogous to the whole plan of providence.

I WILL make one supposition more, and that as favourable to our adversaries as they can reasonably desire. I will suppose that the office of a christian minister exposes him to greater danger of acting viciously than other men. Even this supposition will not avail them much. In this case our station would indeed be hazardous to ourselves: as a few soldiers are sometimes forced to defend a desperate post, in order to preserve a whole army from destruction, so we should be exposed to an imminent danger of losing our own souls, in promoting the salvation of others. But even this would not prove, that our office has an immoral tendency, in any sense, which could affect the credit of our religion. It would be only analogous to what happens in the course of nature, that some situations supply stronger and more numerous temptations than others; and therefore it could never prove, that the gospel is not derived from the author of nature.

THESE observations appeared to be necessary for removing the confusion, in which the charge against the spirit of our profession has been commonly involved, and for enabling us to detect some of the artifices, by which it has been rendered plausible, and seemingly important. The sum is this. If the enemies of our order only prove, that our office tends to

form a character, in which some agreeable qualities are wanting, or even a character positively disagreeable in some respects; or if they prove, that some circumstances in it may be perverted into occasions of vice, or that it presents peculiar temptations, which it will require great caution to avoid complying with, they allege nothing, which can justly affect either the spirit of our office, or the religion, by which it is established. If they can prove no more, they attack us with insufficient weapons; we may expose our bosoms to their pointless arrows, without receiving the slightest hurt. They show their inclination to annoy us; and the undiscerning and the prejudiced may take it for granted, that they have given a mortal wound to religion and its ministers. But the candid and the considerate will soon perceive that, in order to accomplish their design, they must evince, that the *original* and *prevailing* tendency of our office is immoral, that something vicious is necessary in order to promote its genuine end, and to discharge its real duties. To discover whether this has ever been evinced, or can indeed be evinced, is the intention of the sequel.

II. WITH this view we proposed, *secondly*, to enquire, whether that character, which the ministerial office tends to form, be virtuous or vicious on the whole.

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Our office is charged expressly, only with some particular vices: but these are so heinous and so numerous, and softened by the mixture of so few virtues, that, were the charge supported with sufficient evidence it would imply, that the natural character of a clergyman is, upon the whole vicious and detestible. I doubt not however but it will appear, by every kind of evidence, of which the subject can be supposed capable, that a character, in all respects virtuous, is the natural result of our profession.

MAY it not be asserted, in the first place, with considerable evidence, that the clergy in general are, in fact, equal, nay, superior to other classes of men, in whatever deserves the name of moral virtue? And if this be true, will it not form an argument in favour of the genius of our calling? For if it really led to vice, it could scarce fail to corrupt the greater number. It is not easy to prove beyond dispute, what depends upon so many instances, what requires the observation of many ages and nations; nor is it possible, on this occasion, to enter on a long detail from history, to support the assertion: but let any person examine with impartiality, and he will find that, in every state of things, ministers of the gospel have had their full proportion of the virtue of the times. In the best and the most virtuous ages, there have been more of this order eminent for virtue, in proportion to the number of those who belong to it, than of any other. In the

most degenerate times, when religion has been most perverted from its true design, the morals of the clergy have been higher than on a level with those of the laity. If there be any period, in which it has been otherwise, let our adversaries point it out.—We own they have great advantages on their side.—The ministerial office leads to privacy and retreat; the abuses of it often carry a man into public life. On this account, the vices of those clergymen, who have departed from the genius of their office, are conspicuous, and liable to be exposed by the torch of history: but they, who have been steddily actuated by its genuine spirit, have passed thro' life in a virtuous obscurity, revered by those who knew them, their memory honoured for a generation or two, but totally unregarded by history, which confines itself to the actions of the higher ranks of men, or to those actions, which had an influence on the revolutions of government, or on the general state of civil affairs.—It will likewise deserve attention, that in some establishments of religion, many clergymen have not been confined to the proper functions of their office, but have devoted themselves chiefly to secular affairs, perfectly foreign to it. It is not in these, that we can expect to find the genuine character of the order; for the pastoral office cannot possibly exert its influence on a man, who is scarce at all employed in the duties of it. The temper of such a person must necessarily be formed, principally by those secular occupations, in
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which he is most conversant. Yet it is from clergymen in this situation, that persons are readiest to take their idea of the whole body ; because they are most exposed to observation.——Our adversaries derive another advantage from the unequal manner, in which the comparative importance of different virtues and vices is ordinarily estimated. Temperance, piety, and the other virtues, which will naturally predominate in the character of a clergyman, are depressed far below their genuine dignity ; and at the same time many vices, frequent among other ranks of men, but rarely to be found among the clergy, are regarded with a more favourable eye than their real deformity deserves. This perversion of moral sentiment, if it be not guarded against, will necessarily diminish the merit of the clergyman, and raise that of the man of the world, and thus disguise their true proportion to each other.——But let our adversaries take no more advantage from these or other circumstances, than themselves can approve as fair ; let them examine what has been the real character of the clergy, not by selecting a few instances on one side only, but by making a complete and impartial induction ; let them make the same allowance in this case, that they would reckon reasonable in other cases ; let them form their judgment chiefly from those clergymen, who have been employed only in the proper duties of their calling ; at least let them distinguish, in others, between the vices, which belong to them as clergy-

men, and those, which have sprung from their adventitious occupations; let the several virtues, and their opposite vices be valued, I will not say, according to the christian standard, but according to that standard, which the unperverted sentiments of mankind have fixed, and the best heathen moralists have acknowledged; let them tell us honestly the result of their inquiry. If they should find, that ministers of the gospel have been, upon the whole, more blameless, more virtuous than the rest of mankind, that they have for the most part, fallen in latest with a prevailing corruption of manners, that they have often opposed its progress, and been least infected with it, that sometimes the majority of them have totally escaped the contagion of vice, which raged among other ranks; they cannot deny that the ministerial office has a strong tendency to promote the practice of universal virtue.

THAT the result of their enquiry will be what we have supposed, I pronounce with the greater confidence, because it seems to be really acknowledged by all mankind. It is an undeniable matter of fact, that the general sense of mankind proclaims vice to be peculiarly scandalous, and virtue to be peculiarly requisite in a clergyman. They, who pay little regard to the law of morality in their own conduct, demand the most spotless virtue in the teachers of religion. Every deviation from strict virtue, every instance of vice in men of this profession, has always excited

greater and more general indignation, than similar faults in others. Whence does this universal sentiment arise? It can arise from no cause, which is not obvious to the very senses of mankind; for circumstances, which cannot be discovered without close attention and deep penetration, will never affect the generality: their sentiments and judgments are produced only by plain matters of facts. And from what cause can their sentiment on this subject arise, but actual experience of the superior virtue of christian ministers? Familiar objects never strike us strongly. Vices, which we are accustomed to witness, we soon learn to behold without a great degree of horror. Were a vicious minister very common, men must have long ago regarded him with as little indignation as other vicious men. They are peculiarly shocked with vice in a clergyman, for this reason, because they do not find it so frequently in men of this character as in others.

BUT this sentiment of the peculiar unsuitableness of vice to the profession of a clergyman deserves to be considered farther; for not only do mankind, by means of it, give testimony that virtue is more general among ministers than among others, but it likewise contains a *direct* proof, that the genius of our calling is eminently favourable to virtue. It supposes that all the world is sensible, that ministers of the gospel have, from the very nature of their office, peculiar advantages for being virtuous. If this were
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not taken for granted, men could never deem vice peculiarly atrocious in a clergyman, they could never exact uniform virtue more rigorously from him than from any other person. When the situation, in which a man is placed, lays him under strong temptations to vice, we make allowance for it, in our censure of him. We excuse, in some measure, the sallies of youth, because the passions are violent at that time of life. We give some indulgence to the peevishness of old age, because the infirmities incident to that period are powerful temptations to ill humour. We pity, rather than blame a wretch, who, overcome by torture, betrays his friend. The judgment is natural, necessary, and well founded. The vices, on which we are disposed to pass a heavy censure, are those which a man commits without any inducement from his situation, those, which he is under a strong obligation to avoid, and has great advantages for avoiding. When all men, therefore, perceive vice to be incongruous to the character of a clergyman, is not this a confession, that his sacred function has a peculiar fitness for forming him to virtue? Believers and infidels agree in the sentiments, on which our argument is founded, and therefore must equally perceive its force. The natural sentiments even of those, who are most forward to censure the spirit of our office, pronounce vice peculiarly odious, and virtue peculiarly necessary in a clergyman; and these sentiments, arising spontaneously and irresistibly in their hearts, are a much stronger proof of their being conscious of

the moral tendency of the christian ministry, than any refined arguments, formed at leisure, can be of the contrary. Let them either acknowledge, that our office urges us powerfully to all virtue, or let them regard those vices, which they charge upon it, as more venial and excusable, as less worthy of disapprobation in a clergyman, than in another.

BEFORE I leave this topic, allow me to make one observation, which seems to be of importance in estimating the real character of a clergyman. It is the judgment of human nature, that every vice has a singular atrocity in him ; this judgment could not be formed, except vice were comparatively rare in that profession, and likewise absolutely repugnant to its genuine spirit ; yet this very judgment has contributed not a little to bestow plausibility on the assertion, that the spirit of our profession is immoral, an assertion, to which it is altogether contradictory. The consequence of this judgment has been that, while very *high degrees* of vice are overlooked in other men, or, at most, are slightly blamed, the *least appearance* of every vice in a clergyman is immediately remarked and severely condemned. By this means, a few small vices in him appear both greater and more numerous, than many atrocious vices in another, because they are more certainly observed and more heavily censured. A person is highly disapproved, when he bears the character of a clergyman, who would have
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been noways censured, if he had belonged to any other order. Thus the very tendency of the ministerial office to promote virtue has led men, first to think ministers more vicious, in comparison with others, than they really are, and next, in consequence of this, to charge the office itself with a tendency to vice. We own, that mankind do us no injustice in reckoning vice more heinous in us, than in others; but the judgment supposes the spirit of our office to be eminently favourable to virtue; and therefore a person cannot fairly avail himself of it, who denies this, and is examining the real characters of clergymen, in order to determine, whether the spirit of their office be moral or immoral; he ought to estimate *their* actions only by that standard, which he applies to the actions of *others*.

FARTHER, is it worth while to observe, that they, who censure the spirit of our profession most severely, acknowledge its tendency to be moral in one respect. There is one virtue, strict decency and temperance, which they own that we naturally derive from our employment. They insinuate, indeed, that it is the only one. But if it be evident, that this one virtue necessarily promotes other virtues, and gives us advantages for cultivating them, it cannot be denied that our calling, by its immediate influence on this one, will indirectly, but really tend to form the other parts of a virtuous temper.—Decency and temperance implies, at least, strict abstinence from all
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the excesses of pleasure, from the dissipation of gay and thoughtless mirth, and from all those expressions of any of our passions, which are unbecoming. In consequence of this abstinence, the sensual appetites and inferior passions, which are always vicious, when they become excessive, and which in others are apt to become excessive, by being indulged without controul, will, almost unavoidably, be preserved weak and moderate in a clergyman. This is one important ingredient in a virtuous character.—But this is not all. They, who are disposed to regard intemperance and levity with the most favourable eye, can scarce deny, that they often prove occasions of leading men into vices much more heinous. There is no crime so atrocious, but a man brutified by excess, or dissipated by giddiness, may occasionally perpetrate. The basest courses have been taken, in order to procure gratification to pampered appetites. The frequent returns of levity and intemperance may produce repeated acts of any vice, and these repeated acts will, by degrees, render the worst dispositions habitual. Our office, therefore, by confining us to strict rules of decency, preserves us from a situation, which would put us in imminent hazard of committing many acts of vice, and of contracting many evil habits. By this means, it has a peculiar tendency to produce a general purity of heart, which undoubtedly confers very considerable worth upon the character.—A strict regard to decency will likewise influence our temper in another way. It implies a constant restraint of vicious principles, concern that our conduct be right
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and unblameable, and regard to the authority and dictates of the moral faculty. Now there is a natural association among our principles of action, by means of which any one of them prepares the mind for receiving any other, that has the same direction. On this account, a regard to decency must have a tendency to introduce into the soul, justice, veracity, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, and, in a word, all the virtues, which, like itself, hold of controul, and are included in the idea of self-government. The direct principle of all these is the same with that of decency, a sense of duty, a submission to the law of conscience. As every principle is strengthened by being habitually exerted, the authority of conscience will be confirmed by our regard to decency; it will be enabled to controul every wrong affection with greater ease; and, by being accustomed to submit to its government in one instance, we shall be better disposed to submit to it in all. Indeed men are often surprisngly absurd and inconsistent in their conduct; one passion may be perfectly ungoverned, while another is restrained. On this account, we cannot affirm, that a regard to decency will *necessarily* produce all the virtues of self-government: but it certainly *tends* to have a favourable influence upon them: and our office, by almost *certainly* producing that, will *probably* promote these others.—The principle obstruction to the prevalence of good affections arises from the strength of some vicious passions, which oppose
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their exercise. A regard to decency, by contributing *directly* to weaken these vicious passions, will lay the mind open to the influence of worthy affections, and will thus give us great advantages for acquiring all those amiable virtues, which consist in the exercise of them.—If, therefore, strict decency and temperance result naturally from our profession, it must have, at least, an indirect tendency to promote all other virtues. The concessions of our adversaries, however small they may appear, imply that our profession has a real tendency to promote universal virtue.

THESE general arguments, drawn from the real characters of the generality of clergymen ; from the natural judgment of mankind, that virtue is peculiarly incumbent on them ; and from the influence of that partial virtue, which is allowed by all to result naturally from our profession, appeared too important to be wholly omitted, because they not only are conclusive in themselves, but also throw considerable light on the whole of this subject.—But the most direct proof of the tendency of our office, to form us to a temper of universal virtue, still remains. It arises from the nature of that office.

As moral causes have doubtless a very great influence on the characters of men, so all professions, it is allowed, contain fixt moral principles, which tend to produce a correspondent character, and have often
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force enough to alter the disposition, that was received from nature. Now we may learn, with certainty, the tendency of the moral principles, essential to any profession, by examining the nature of that profession, its end, and the proper means of promoting that end. If we survey the ministerial office in this manner, we shall find, that it has an essential tendency to promote a virtuous temper.

THE business of a minister of the gospel is, in brief, to teach religion. The tendency of his office will, therefore, be altogether determined by the nature of the religion, which he teaches. Christianity includes all the principles of natural religion, and superadds the revelation of a stupendous dispensation of providence, for the redemption and reformation of an apostate world, by Jesus Christ. The truths of natural theology, especially as they are illustrated and refined in scripture, center in this, that to *fear God, and keep his commandment is the whole of man* (g). The peculiar doctrines of revelation *teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly* (b). Both are proposed in the scriptures, the only rule of our teaching, with an express design to form us to the love of God and of man, to make us *perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works* (i). Religious principles are constantly represented as arguments for all virtue, and addressed

(g) Eccles. xii. 13. (b) Tit. ii. 12. (i) 2 Tim. iii. 17.

to our hopes, to our fears, to our gratitude, to our honour, to our propensity to imitation, to every affection of the human heart, that can have any influence on conduct. At the same time, in the scriptures, all the parts of virtue, all the duties of life, are illustrated in the justest, and the most practical manner. Our employment is, to promote the belief and the practice of this religion; to recommend goodness, by publishing truth; to explain virtue, and enforce it by all possible motives. Can such employment tend to form us to any other temper, than that virtue, which we inculcate upon others?

It is certainly first of all requisite in a teacher, that he understand the subject of his teaching, and that, for this purpose, he study it with care. Our profession will, therefore, naturally lead us to the diligent and constant study of all the doctrines and duties of religion; it will urge us to *know the holy scriptures* (k), to *meditate upon them*, to *give ourselves wholly to them* (l), that we may be *able to preach to others* (m). If, then, religious or moral considerations, if precepts, or arguments, if maxims, or sentiments, examples, or rules of virtue have really *any* force, they must exert it *most* in purifying, refining, and exalting the tempers of those, whose whole business it is, to attend to them. Since ministers must often think on all these, that they

(k) 2 Tim. iii. 15. (l) 1. Tim. iv. 15. (m) 2 Tim. ii. 2.

may understand them, and that they may inculcate them upon others; the consequence will be, that, if they are, like other men, subject to the law of habit, incitements to virtue will occur to their thoughts more easily and frequently, than to the thoughts of others, and urge them more powerfully to a suitable behaviour.

A GREAT part of the vice, with which other men are infected, arises from the temptations, to which they are exposed in the course of their worldly business. Each of them has a temporal vocation, the direct end of which does not coincide with that of their spiritual calling, and which therefore sometimes leads them off from the duties of the latter. But ministers of the gospel have no worldly business: the nature of their office, as well as the authority of scripture, to which they are indispensibly obliged to submit, forbids them to *entangle themselves with the affairs of this life* (n); and, by consequence, preserves them, while they continue in their proper province, from those temptations, which produce the greatest part of the wickedness of the world. Our occupation is, to enforce a sense of virtue and religion upon others; and every attempt of this kind is an act of virtue, which tends directly to our own improvement. Every effort, which we make in our *particular* vocation, promotes the end of our *general* calling.

(n) 2 Tim. ii. 4.

OUR office leads us to observe our fellow-creatures in all those situations, in which either virtuous principles, or the sense of vice, produce the most conspicuous effects, and tend most strongly to alarm a spectator, and to force him to attend to the opposite natures of good and evil. It introduces us, for example into *the house of mourning* (o), it conducts us to the bed of death. There we observe virtue supporting those who have been steady in the practice of it, under all the agonies of pain, and enabling them to triumph in the prospect of their dissolution, as a second birth, a glorious birth into the world of pure light and immortality. There we see vice taking fast hold of those, in the hour of perplexity, who have formerly eluded its painful grasp; we behold the horrors of remorse, and the ghastly fears of guilt; we perceive the wicked, in his latest moments, inheriting the unforsaken sins of his youth; he looks eagerly for comfort to every side, but he can find no comfort; the flattering temptations, which have seduced him, already appear to be delusions; he feels already, that all which this world contains, is a vain shadow, that eternity alone is real; and he feels the pains of hell begun already in himself; if his faltering tongue should attempt to dissemble the anguish of his soul, his trembling joints, his beating heart, his agonized and despairing look, proclaim it in more striking language. Is there nothing in all this, by which *the heart* may be *made better*? (p) Others may have some opportu-

(o) Eccles. vii. 2.

(p) Ver. 3.

nties of this kind ; but our opportunities are so frequent, that the impression made by one instance can scarce decay, till it be revived and strengthened by another. Must not that man be destitute of all principles of reformation, who is not formed to virtue by these means ?

It is our business to *instruct* (q), to *convince*, to *exhort* (r), to *charge* (s), to *intreat* (t), to *reprove* and to *rebuke* (u) others. Can a vicious man be thus employed, without some secret misgivings, without some inward checks, without sometimes feeling the agonies of remorse ? And have these no tendency to excite a man to that genuine virtue, which alone can keep his own heart from condemning him ? Can ministers allow themselves in any open and known vice, and yet urge abstinence from every vice on others, in public, and in private, in the solemn assemblies, and *from house to house* (x) ? Will it not require a degree of impudence and effrontery, which is seldom to be found, even in the most degenerate ?

MANKIND are extremely averse from labouring in vain. Let an end be of ever so little importance in itself, yet a person, who is actually engaged in the pursuit of it, becomes anxious to attain it, and cannot, without uneasiness, bear the thought of disappoint-

(q) 2 Tim. ii. 25. (r) Tit. i. 9. (s) 1 Tim. vi. 17. 1 Tim. ii. 14. (t) 1 Tim. v. 1. (u) Ver. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 2. (x) Act. xx. 20.

ment. The end of our office is of the greatest importance in itself; it is to form mankind to virtue. We cannot promote it, without being highly virtuous ourselves. An *example* of vice, exhibited by us, will render the best *instructions ineffectual*, and will lead men into vice, with much *greater* force, than all our exhortations have to urge them to virtue. When this is the certain consequence of wickedness in ministers, must not we acknowledge, either that they alone of all mankind have no concern for success, and are in love with disappointment, or that they have, from their office, a peculiar and powerful motive to be exemplarily virtuous, to *shew themselves in all things patterns of good works* (y)?

THE opinion of the world has very great, often too great influence on all men. Can it be supposed that it will not likewise have some influence on ministers of the gospel? It sometimes leads other men astray into vice; but it invariably urges ministers to the strictest virtue; for every vice, in them, appears scandalous to all mankind, and necessarily renders them *contemptible and base before all the people* (z). Is it not a considerable advantage, that a motive, so powerful as the sense of character, is constantly applied to us on the side of virtue?

WILL not it also have some influence on ministers of the gospel, that in the opinion of the world, the

(y) Tit. ii. 7. (z) Mal. ii. 9.

vices of each individual reflect dishonour on the whole order, and bring the office itself into contempt? Can a man consider with perfect indifference, that he renders himself an object of just indignation to thousands of worthy men of his own profession, whom his vices expose to undeserved ignominy? When the meanest artificer is solicitous to represent his own occupation in a favourable light, can we imagine ministers so totally destitute of the most ordinary principles of human nature, as to have no concern to be virtuous, when that alone can prevent *the ministry* from being *blamed*? (a) — Nay the vices of ministers have still worse effects. Men impute them to religion itself, and censure and disregard it on account of them. Our vices make men to *abhor the offering of the Lord* (b); they *cause many to stumble at the law* (c); they *cause the name of God and his doctrine to be blasphemed*; they induce great numbers to *make shipwreck of their faith*, to harden themselves in their sins, and to destroy their own souls. Can this consideration fail to operate powerfully on every man who is not lost to all good principles?

To enumerate all the peculiar inducements which the ministers of Jesus have to pure and exalted virtue, were indeed to explain all the circumstances of the pastoral office. From the few observations, which we have made already, it appears evident, that that office tends to promote virtue in those who exercise it,

(a) 2 Cor. vi. 3. (b) 2 Sam. ii. 17. (c) Mal. ii. 8.

by many moral causes essential to it, and fit to work on the most universal and unquestionable principles of human nature.

BUT though our office has plainly an essential and unalterable tendency to purify and refine the heart, yet we will acknowledge—we reckon ourselves noways concerned to dissemble it,—it highly imports us to consider it very often,—that our profession will not form us infallibly to virtue; nay that, if we allow it to fail of producing this its primary and most natural effect, the very circumstances, which give us so many advantages for virtue, will render us more deeply and more obstinately wicked than the rest of mankind.—By the original constitution of our nature, habit, which strengthens our *active* principles, weakens all *passive* impressions. The more frequently that we consider or feel motives to virtue, without being really excited to the practice of virtue, the feebler will be their influence upon us, the greater our insensibility, the more imminent our danger of never yielding to their force. This is an alarming truth to all human creatures, but to ministers of the gospel more alarming than to others. We must revolve and preach the truths and duties of religion so frequently, that if they do not influence us early to sincere and stedfast virtue, they must quickly become familiar and lose their power. Moral and divine considerations must pass so continually through our minds, that in a very short time they will make no impression on us. A person whom our

profession does not render virtuous, will become more suddenly and more desperately obdurate in wickedness, than any other man.—Nothing contributes more to strengthen any principle, than an opposition, which doth not effectually restrain it. Our profession contains the most powerful inducements to virtue; these will, at least, make a vigorous *opposition* to all vicious principles of action; but if the opposition do not subdue them, they will collect all their force in order to surmount it, and they will be strengthened and confirmed by the violent effort. As a sluice, which cannot stem a torrent altogether, only renders the inundation greater, and greater still the longer it keeps it back; just so vicious passions, which are too violent to be wholly restrained by the fences which our profession raises against them, will produce the most dreadful deluge of wickedness, whenever their fury can break down these fences. If a pastor be really vicious, he will, almost necessarily, be singularly vicious. Nothing less than a total depravation of soul can be the effect of a man's resisting the strict obligations to virtue, and abusing the signal advantages for cultivating it, which the pastoral office affords.—In these and, perhaps, in some other ways, our office may heighten vice in those, who refuse to be actuated by its genuine spirit. But this concession will avail our antagonists nothing. Were this a sufficient proof, that our office tends naturally to vice, it would likewise be a proof, that all consideration of our duty, or of arguments for
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the practice of it, has a natural tendency to render us vicious ; for it is certain, that the oftener any man reflects on his duty, and the stronger his sense of its obligation is, if he be not really excited to the practice of it, the less chance there is of his ever practising it, the more hardened in vice he will become in time, and the more impetuously ungoverned passions will rage within him.

BOTH from the former arguments, and from the survey that we have taken of the nature of our office, it is plain, that it tends primarily and most naturally to virtue. It promotes, not one virtue, but a temper which disposes the mind to the culture of every virtue. It is the abuse of it that leads to vice ; and the abuse leads so strongly to vice, only because the office itself has a powerful influence on virtue. If this *general* examination of the genius of our calling be not *necessary* for vindicating it from the aspersions of our adversaries, it is notwithstanding highly *proper* for producing in ourselves, my reverend fathers and brethren, a sense of the strength of those obligations to virtue which we lie under.

III. WE will now enquire, *thirdly*, how far our office has really a tendency to produce or to inflame those particular vices, which some have represented as characteristical of our order.

THIS is the more necessary, because the late author, to whom we have referred, has unwarily admitted

some fallacious principles, and wrong suppositions into the reasoning, by which he supports the charge. These render his arguments specious, and make those inducements to vice appear to arise from the original and prevailing spirit of our profession, which are really but the partial effects of some of its circumstances, or accidental temptations arising from the abuse of it. And because these fallacies run through all the parts of his reasoning, it will be proper, before we examine the particular vices, which he derives from the genius of our calling, to make a few observations on the general method, in which he traces out the tendency of that calling.

If we should allow that he has given a true account of the tendency of those circumstances in our profession, which he mentions, yet we might insist with reason, that he has applied the character, which results from them, by far too generally. He justly blames the undistinguished judgments of the vulgar, who comprehend every individual of a nation, without exception, in the same national character. He justly observes, that all that can be asserted with truth is, that some particular qualities will be more frequently met with among some classes of people than others. Has he preserved this necessary caution and delicacy in determining the character of the clergy? He indeed says, there are exceptions. I will not enquire, how far he can seriously admit exceptions, with respect

to some particulars, consistently with the manner in which his reasoning is pursued. But certainly it was wrong to combine all the vices, which he mentions, into one character, and to ascribe it to most individuals of our order. The same temptation will not prevail with all ; but only with those to whose constitution it is adapted. Every day's experience proves, that that may be an irresistible temptation to one man, which makes no impression on another. Though, therefore, the genius of our calling were such as it is described, it could only be inferred, that some of the vices which are enumerated, will belong to one clergyman, others to another, but not that all these vices will be united in the temper of any considerable number. The circumstances which operate on the character are so various, and on that account, the influence of each of them is so precarious, and the turn of mind from which each derives its force is so uncertain, that we ought to reason on this subject with a peculiar degree of diffidence.

It is easy to select a few circumstances, in any profession, which, considered by themselves, may appear to have an immoral tendency ; but we cannot thence infer that the profession hath an immoral tendency upon the whole ; for the influence of these may be overbalanced by other circumstances equally essential to it. Were we to estimate the character, which any profession forms, by the separate view of some circumstances belonging to it, we might represent it in

a very unfavourable light. The character of a soldier is reckoned so amiable by this author, that he judges it the fittest to be opposed to ours, in order to set off its deformity. But it is a soldier's business to fight and kill, at the command of his superiors, without examining the justice of the cause. Were it fair to attend to this circumstance alone, we might say that his employment necessarily renders him cruel, arbitrary, a contemner of right, and an absolute pest in society. Such precisely is the reasoning, by which this author would prove, that our office necessarily inflames many of the blackest vices of human nature. He has, by some oversight, omitted many circumstances essential to it, which have the most powerful influence on virtue; he has fixed on a few circumstances, some of them really foreign to our office, and others of them but casually and remotely connected with it; he has considered the effects, which these would produce, if they constituted the whole of our office; and I will venture to say, he has exaggerated both these effects, and the causes, from which they are represented as proceeding. In this respect his reasoning is fallacious, being built on an insufficient foundation.

WHEN it appears that any circumstance in a profession, viewed in one light, tends to vice, we cannot always conclude, that even this circumstance tends to vice upon the whole; because it may as naturally, or
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more naturally, produce other effects of an opposite kind. It is the office of a judge to pronounce sentence exactly according to law, without regard to the ties of relation, to compassion, or to worthiness of character. By considering this circumstance in one point of view, we might be inclined to think, that this office naturally banishes from the heart, pity, generosity, friendship, the love of relations, and all the amiable offspring of benevolence. But this will not be its natural effect; for this unbiassed regard to right, in opposition to all inducements from affection, is fit to cherish an attachment to publick happiness, for promoting which all the rules of justice are calculated; and, by giving constant exercise to the sense of virtue, it strengthens this sense, and enables it to controul all vicious dispositions, and to lay the mind open, by this means, to the operation of every generous, and kind, and worthy affection. But this author has considered those circumstances in our profession, of which he takes notice, only in one point of view; he has observed only some of their consequences on the character, but has unluckily overlooked others, more essential and important, and of a perfectly contrary nature. If this be true, his arguments will be inconclusive, and that may be but a very *partial* tendency, which they would represent as the prevailing spirit of our office.

THIS author begins his character of our profession, by adopting a trite maxim, which, he says, is not al-

together false, that *priests of all religions are the same*. I think, it may be easily proved, that this maxim cannot be true. It necessarily supposes, that the way of life and the occupation of priests of all religions is perfectly the same. Different causes can produce the same or similar effects, only by means of those qualities which they possess in common. Every circumstance in an occupation has some influence upon the character. Characters, therefore, perfectly uniform, cannot be the result of occupations, which do not coincide in all respects. Politeness and the good qualities related to it, make up the character, which this author derives from the profession of a *modern* soldier. He quotes a saying of an ancient writer, who was perfectly well acquainted with life and manners, that *it is not in the power even of the gods to make a polite soldier*. Yet the way of life of an *ancient* soldier included almost all the circumstances from which he derives the politeness of a *modern* soldier. The very same profession, therefore, may produce perfectly contrary characters, in different periods, by means of a difference in the prevailing manners of the world. It is strange, that an author of uncommon penetration, who had remarked in this instance, that a small change, in the customs of common life, could even reverse the spirit of one profession, should immediately after produce a maxim, which supposes that the greatest change in religious principles and customs,

customs, cannot make any alteration in the character of priests.—Priests, being the ministers of religion, must derive, from their office, a character correspondent to the nature of that religion, in which they minister. But surely the nature of *all* religions is not perfectly the same. This author acknowledges in another place (*d*), that no two nations, and scarce any two men, have agreed precisely in the same religious sentiments; that polytheism of every kind is, most properly, a sort of superstitious atheism, similar to a belief of elves and fairies, which it is great complaisance to dignify with the name of religion. The pagan religion consisted wholly of groundless fables, inconsistent traditions, immoral tales, insignificant ceremonies, and empty pageantry (*e*). Could it then have the same tendency with christianity, which delivers the genuine principles of theism, which institutes very few ceremonial duties, which every where represents these as subservient to moral virtue, which proclaims, that the alone *weighty matters of the law* are *justice, mercy, fidelity, and the love of God* (*f*), which sets before men the most illustrious examples of every virtue, and the strongest motives to the practice of it? Can a pagan priest, wholly employed in the absurd rites of the former, derive *from his office* the same character, to which a christian minister will be naturally formed, by teaching the doctrines, and inculcating the duties of the latter? What one prin-

(*d*) Natural history of religion, p. 2, 25, 34. (*e*) *ibid.* p. 69.
 (*f*) Matt, xxiii. 23. Luke xi. 42.

ciple almost is common to their functions? The protestant religion is very different from popery, both in its form, and in its spirit. The office of a popish priest is, in consequence of this, very different from that of a protestant minister. The one is continually recommending insignificant ceremonies, as a compensation for real goodness; the other is perpetually inculcating, that nothing can compensate the want of it. Can these employments promote the very same turn of character? It can scarce be said, that priests of these two religions agree in the acknowledgement of the scriptures; for in popery the scriptures are made void by legends and traditions. But if they agree in this, the only part of their character, which they can, on this account, derive in common from their office, is either that which results from the general tendency of revelation, the love of God and man, or those virtues which are recommended particularly to the ministers of religion. And what are these? The scripture commands them to be *apt to teach, blameless, holy, godly, vigilant, sober, temperate, not given to wine, modest, of good behaviour, just, not covetous, not strikers, not brawlers, not self-willed, not soon angry, patient, forbearing, gentle, meek, peaceable, benevolent, given to hospitality, lovers of good men* (g). May these ever be the qualities, in which priests of all religions agree! But then their character will be, in every respect, the reverse of what this author has drawn for them.—

(g) 1 Tim. iii. 2, 3. chap. vi. 11. 2 Tim. ii. 22, 24. Tit. i. 7, 8.

In a word, because different religions are unlike in many circumstances, fit to operate on the character, priests of all religions cannot be the same.

It is not very easy to determine with certainty, what place the false maxim, which we have mentioned, really possesses in this author's reasoning; whether it be one of the principles, which he uses in ascertaining the tendency of the sacerdotal office; or whether it be the conclusion which he draws from circumstances, supposed to belong to that office, in all the various forms of religion.

If it be a principle on which the reasoning proceeds, it ought to have been clearly proved before it was adopted; for, if it be really false or doubtful, every argument built upon it is destitute of evidence, however plausible it may appear to those who take the principle for granted. If it be considered in this light, there is but one argument produced for proving it.

“ Priests of all religions are the same, for as chymists
 “ observe, that spirits, when raised to a certain height,
 “ are all the same, from whatever materials they be
 “ extracted; so these men, being elevated above hu-
 “ manity, acquire an uniform character, which is en-
 “ tirely their own.” Do you think that this com-
 parison bestows any evidence upon the maxim? Is the distillation of spirits, by a chemical process, a case exactly similar to the forming of

a character, by means of religious and moral principles? And is it not somewhat strange, to suppose all priests elevated above humanity, as a step towards proving, that they are all sunk into vices, which depress humanity below itself? To produce this as an argument, would be unworthy of this ingenious philosopher, who is well acquainted with the rules of reasoning; who can easily discern the fallacy of very specious arguments; who is even scrupulous in allowing men to reason from one subject to another, in which the least circumstance of similarity is wanting (*b*). It is a mere metaphor, an allusion to a fact, so wholly dissimilar, that it has almost too much the appearance of a turn of wit, to be admitted as an apposite image in the more serious kinds of poetry. On this account, I am inclined to think, that the maxim in question was intended, not for a principle in the reasoning, but for the conclusion deducible from it.

BUT if the author really designed to infer, from the nature of our office, that priests of all religions agree in the character, which he describes, he ought not to suppose this conclusion in determining the nature of that office. This is plainly reasoning in a circle. Yet many of his arguments rest on this supposition, and will be inconclusive without it. Could this manner of reasoning be allowed, it is obvious that great advantage might be derived from it. By means of it

(*b*) Essay on a particular providence, &c. page 230.

all the basest corruptions of religion come to be regarded as essential parts of it ; every thing, which, in consequence of the corruption of religion, has ever been attempted by its ministers, in the most degenerate state of things, for supporting or promoting that corruption, comes to be represented as a necessary part of the pastoral office, though it be in fact repugnant to the very nature and design of it.

BUT if we would examine fairly and impartially, what is the tendency of the pastoral office, with respect to any virtue or vice, we must distinguish the *office* itself from the *abuses* of it. In order to this, we must take our account of it only from the scriptures ; we must consider the end for which they declare that it was appointed, the employment on which they put christian ministers for promoting that end, and the rules which they prescribe concerning the manner of executing their employment. An infidel cannot justly proceed in any other way ; for whether the scriptures have any real authority or not, it is only in them that the institution of this office, or the manner of executing it, is said to be contained. Whatever is not, by the scriptures, incumbent on a clergyman, is *foreign* to his office, at least ; and may be *inconsistent* with it, however generally it be practised. An enquirer must first discover, in this manner, what our office really is ; and then he must consider all the circumstances of it together, trace out all the natural effects of each, balance

lance the good and the bad effects of the same circumstance, and weigh the tendencies of different circumstances against one another, before he can expect to determine its genuine spirit. This will be, indeed, a difficult and complex induction; but philosophers know well, that an induction equally severe is requisite, before a certain conclusion can be established, in subjects of a less intricate nature than the formation of human characters. Whether the author, whose arguments we are examining, has observed this method; whether, in estimating our character, he has not, on the contrary, fixed on some circumstances in our profession, considered even these but in one light, pointed out only some of their effects upon the character, unduly exaggerated particulars, and argued from circumstances foreign to the office of a christian minister, nay wholly contradictory to it; I will appeal to the impartial; I will appeal to his own candour, after he has reviewed his arguments, by the acknowledged rules of reasoning. It will appear in some measure, from the following examination of those vices which our office is said to have a fixt and unalterable tendency to promote. They are *hypocrisy, superstition, ambition, vanity, party-spirit, rancour*. Truly a black catalogue of the most diabolical vices! Had one of us drawn such a character for the laity in general, or for any particular profession, would it not have been cited as an instance of *priestly fury*? But destitute, as we are represented to be, of the noble virtues of *humanity,*
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meekness and *moderation*, we will content ourselves with submitting our cause coolly to the cognizance of reason.

DO those abominable vices, which have been mentioned, indeed compose the genuine character of the ministers of Jesus ? Are these the natural result of their profession ? Say, christians, when you look around you, and observe the ministers, who come within your knowledge, do you really find *these* to be the qualities, which are predominant in the temper and conduct of the greatest part of them ? — Would you be disposed to give greater *indulgence* to these vices in a minister than in another ? Or would not your hearts condemn them as *unsuitable* to his profession ? If these vices resulted necessarily from our office, would it not follow, that mankind must be disposed to excuse *them* in ministers, on account of the difficulty of their avoiding them ? But can our adversaries say, that hypocrisy, ambition, pride, rancour, or any other vice in that horrid catalogue, by which they describe the spirit of our calling, is regarded with a more favourable eye in one of us, than in men of a different occupation ? The weak may not perceive some exertions of these principles to be vicious, the prejudiced may mistake them for virtuous : but whenever they are at all disapproved as wrong, are not they, as well as other vices, condemned with singular severity in a clergyman ? Doth not the common sense of mankind

kind thus declare that our office tends to promote the virtues opposite to these, as well as other virtues? Some vices are reckoned more indecent in a clergyman than others; but *all* vices are reckoned more indecent in him, than in any other man. Some virtues are esteemed more indispensibly necessary than others, but *every* virtue is esteemed more requisite in this profession than in other professions.

T H E R E are two circumstances in our profession, which, it is said, necessarily form us to *hypocrisy*.—One is the obligation, which it lays us under to observe strict decency.—Decency consists in abstaining from all behaviour, that is either vicious or offensive. The most natural principle of this abstinence is virtue; and our office obliges us to decency, only by obliging us to blameless virtue. Did it exert its full influence upon our character, we should not stand in need of dissimulation, in order to appear virtuous. Indeed it cannot be expected, in the present imperfect state, that this office will exert its full influence universally, or produce that exalted virtue, which it demands, in all who exercise it. On this account many ministers may have an inducement from their profession, to endeavour in particular instances, to conceal vices and imperfections, which really belong to them. Yet still this is but a secondary tendency, by which the profession cannot be fairly characterized;

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a tendency too, which reflects honour upon it, because it proceeds only from the strength of its original tendency to virtue.—And is that conduct, which even this secondary tendency produces, absolutely blameable? Can it be allowed, that all reserve is criminal hypocrisy? Is every man obliged in honesty to discover to others all the faults, of which he is conscious in himself? Is it not *right* to conceal our vices from the knowledge of others, by all lawful means? Will it not in some measure prevent the infection of our bad example? Certainly it is not criminal for a person to endeavour to reform himself from any vice which he has contracted. Yet this can be done, only by setting a guard over his words and actions, and abstaining from giving scope to those wrong passions, which continue to solicit him very powerfully. May not a minister abstain from the practice of vices, to which he is disposed, from a sense of duty, or from a desire to extirpate them by degrees; or may not he abstain from things which he knows to be lawful, in charitable indulgence to the weakness of others, or from a regard to character, without any fault, without being liable to the charge of hypocrisy, without incurring any danger of destroying the candour and ingenuity of his temper, or making an irreparable breach in his character? Is not the conduct rather laudable?—Indeed if a clergyman be obstinately wicked, he will be exposed to a temptation, from his office, to *blameable* hypocrisy. In every profession,
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the vicious are often induced to affect an appearance of virtue, in order to promote their designs. The pastoral office will not render every individual really virtuous. But it cannot be executed by a person who is known to be vicious. It is, therefore, probable that a vicious minister will put on a false show of goodness. But shall the whole order be, for this reason, charged with affecting a continued grimace, in order to support the veneration of the ignorant vulgar, and promote the spirit of superstition? Absurd *corruptions* of religion there have been, which were intended for promoting a spirit of superstition, and which could not be supported without an implicit veneration of the priest: but to argue from these, is to confound the vilest perversions of religion with christianity, the basest prostitutions of the pastoral office with the office itself. Where do the scriptures enjoin a clergyman to promote a superstitious spirit? The clergyman, who aims at it, pursues a wrong end, suggested to him by his corrupt passions, not by his office, to which it is altogether foreign; and the same corrupt passions lead him to pervert his office, that it may become subservient to this end. For what part of the pastoral function is the blind veneration of the ignorant vulgar requisite? Indeed we cannot execute our office, without being careful to deserve esteem; virtue alone deserves it; our office, therefore, prompts us strongly to virtue. If any of us attempt to supply the want of virtue, by affected grimace,

grimace, in order to procure esteem, he uses unlawful means of accomplishing a lawful end; he is guilty of base hypocrisy, the temptation to which arises indeed from his office, but arises solely from its rendering virtue necessary for the execution of it. If any of us weakly mistake grimace for the genuine dignity of virtue, he confounds a vice with a good quality, to which it bears some general resemblance. But how does the ministerial office contribute to the mistake? Do any of the duties of that office, described in scripture, or does the example of our Saviour, who *came eating and drinking* (i), or the example of his apostles lead into it? It arises only from the weakness of men, which produces similar instances of self-deceit in all professions. — We may add, that our danger of being seduced into hypocritical grimace cannot justly make the character of our order appear in a disadvantageous light, when it is compared with the character of other ranks of men. The weakness of our nature may render that corruption of religion and of our office, from which the temptation to hypocrisy arises, very frequent; but the same cause will as frequently introduce dishonest views, and dishonest artifices, of different kinds, into other professions. When the pastoral office is actually perverted from its real end, to promote the purposes of a corrupt religion, the temptation to hypocrisy may be very strong, so as actually to prevail with many of our order; but

(i) Matth. xi. 19.

the perversions of other professions afford temptations, to those species of dishonesty and craft which suit them, as irresistible and as universally prevalent. The hypocrisy, which arises from our compliance with these temptations is highly blameable and pernicious, but is not generally baser or more destructive than the various frauds and artifices, which are practised by bad men in other callings. — On the whole, our office leads primarily to real virtue, not to an affected appearance of it; it very naturally produces a grave and serious temper, and a cautious attention to our deportment, which may be disagreeable to the gay and dissipated, and which they may uncharitably charge with hypocrisy, because of its contrariety to their own manners, but which is totally distinct from vicious grimace; corruptions of religion may pervert our office so far as to lead us to pursue ends, which cannot be accomplished without affected grimace, but the temptation to it is to be imputed, not to our office, or to religion, but to the corruption of both, and to the weakness and fault of individuals; and whatever degree of grimace may really prevail among the clergy, it cannot justly expose them to peculiar disapprobation, because many kinds of dishonest art, as odious to the full as this, are equally general among other ranks of men.

It is likewise said, that our office promotes hypocrisy, by leading us to be employed in the exercises of religion

religion oftener than we can be possessed with the real spirit of devotion.——It leads us, indeed, to be frequently employed in the exercises of religion. The natural tendency of this is, to improve a temper of piety in our souls; for every habit is formed and strengthened by frequent exercise. Ministers will sometimes find their devotion languid, when they are called to exercise it. But the more constantly an affection is exerted, the stronger and more habitual it is rendered by this means, the less will a person be indisposed for exerting it. If, therefore, our office leads us to be more constant in the exercises of devotion, than other men, it will necessarily render us less subject, than others, to fits of languor. They who have not originally a higher or more constant spirit of devotion, than the generality of mankind, will naturally acquire it, by being engaged in our profession. It cannot be denied, that our employment has an essential and strong tendency to form us to eminent and constant piety, the most necessary and the most excellent of all virtues, without absurdly supposing, either that frequent acts of any virtue have no tendency to promote a habit of that virtue, or that the strength of a habit has no tendency to lead us to act frequently upon it. —— But it is said, that our office obliges us to affect devotion often, when we are already jaded with the exercises of it, or when our minds are engaged in worldly occupations. Suppose that it sometimes called us to devotion, when we are

in this situation. Is it necessarily unlawful to attempt to exert a good affection, when a person is ill disposed to it? If the attempt proceed from a sense of duty, it is surely virtuous. And it is remarked by philosophers (*k*), that one of the most proper seasons for exerting a principle, so as to improve it, is when we are worst disposed. Then a strong effort will be necessary to overcome the opposition arising from our reluctance; and by this effort the principle will acquire greater strength, than if it had been exercised more easily (*l*). When other men find themselves indisposed for devotion, they may be tempted to neglect it; by neglecting it they will become more indisposed; and are thus in danger of becoming, by degrees, habitually impious; but a clergyman, being under a necessity, from his office, to exercise it, is led, by this means, to take one of the fittest opportunities for cultivating a temper of real piety.—As our affections arise directly from just conceptions of their objects, we can seldom be so averse from the exercise of any affection, that it cannot be produced by due attention to its object. Our office leads us to frequent meditation on that God, who is the object of devotion, and on all those subjects, which can render our sentiments of his perfections vigorous and lively. It thus affords us the proper and direct means of rousing pious affections, when they are languid. And since

(*k*) Bacon de Aug. Scient. lib. 7. cap. 3. (*l*) Hume's Dissert. on the passions, pag. 176.

our office thus fixes us in contemplation of God, and obliges us frequently to exercise devout affections towards him, we must be grossly faulty, if we be, at any time, so ill-disposed, as to approach to him with feigned devotion. By these advantages, which our profession gives us, piety may be rendered so habitually predominant in our temper, that it shall eagerly seize every opportunity of acting, and that we shall be able to exercise sincere devotion, in circumstances, in which they, who are seldom employed in religious duties, judging of us by themselves, may think it impossible, and censure our worship as hypocritical.— But is there no danger that we may be contented with going the round of religious exercises, without being at pains to excite the inward affections, which ought to animate them? And if we should, will not this produce hypocrisy? Undoubtedly. Mere formal worship, frequently gone about, tends to make us think that we are already possessed of those inward affections from which our worship should have proceeded, and thus prevents our setting ourselves to cultivate them, and confirms us in hypocrisy. This danger arises from the very constitution of human nature, and extends to all external actions, which may sometimes proceed from other principals than the virtue, to which they correspond, and will, in that case, disguise our want of that virtue from us. If ministers, notwithstanding the peculiar advantages, which their profession gives them for cultivating a temper of real

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piety, engage in devotion without exciting that temper into act, they will be in greater danger, than others, of becoming insensible of their want of piety, and will more quickly contract a strong habit of hypocrisy, by reason of their frequent calls to devotion. But is this habit really worse, than a want of all appearance of religion, which these men would have infallibly run into, from the same degeneracy of mind, in any profession, which did not give them frequent calls to devotion? Or though it were, can our profession be justly blamed for requiring those acts of devotion, from the wrong performance of which that habit springs? If it could, it must follow, that *all* exercise of devotion is not only useless but highly dangerous. Nay, on this principle, all good external actions must be censured, as tending to corrupt the character, because they may be performed, when they do not proceed from their natural principle, and because, when they are thus performed, they will rather obstruct, than promote the improvement of that principle.—But, after all, a clergyman can really be in no *peculiar* danger from the *public* exercises of religion, because in them all the people profess to join; and yet they alone appear to be intended by this author. He seems to have had those priests in his eye, who are almost constantly employed in running over forms of devotion, in a language which the people do not understand. But is it fair to draw an argument from them, to clergymen, who, by their office, only preside

preside in those exercises of devotion in which all the people are as much concerned as they? He seems likewise to confound mechanical warmth and extasy, which must needs be transient, with calm and rational piety, which may actuate the mind as habitually, and uninterruptedly, and be as much in readiness to exert itself, whenever an occasion offers, as gratitude, friendship, or any other affection of the human heart. —In a word, our profession is singularly fit to form us to sincere and exalted piety, by obliging us to frequency in those exercises of devotion, by the right performance of which alone a temper of piety can be formed, and by giving us great advantages for performing them aright; we may indeed perform them in a wrong manner, it may require strict attention to avoid it, if we do not bestow this attention, we may become hypocritical in our devotions; but the fault will be chargeable, not on our office, but on ourselves, who have resisted its primary and natural impulse.

To conclude this head, the prevailing tendency of those functions, in which we are employed, is to promote virtue and piety; they will tempt the obstinately vicious to hypocrisy, but they could not cease to tempt them to this, without ceasing to urge powerfully to universal goodness. Those only will become hypocrites by being engaged in our profession, who

would have been either dishonest or abandoned, if they had followed another occupation.

ANOTHER of the vices imputed to our office is *superstition*, leading us to regard an appearance of religion, or zeal for religious observances, as a full compensation for all vices and violations of morality. — But is there any spirit, against which the scriptures, the only rule of our instructions, guard mankind with greater care? Can we teach the religion of *Jesus*, without making it a great part of our business to warn our people against this vile perversion of devotion? What circumstance can there be, then, in our profession, that puts us in peculiar danger of superstition? This author really mentions none. Instead of supporting his charge, instead of attempting to prove, that superstition is one of those characters, which are entirely our own, he observes that all mankind almost have a strong propensity to it; an observation, which is inconsistent with its being peculiar to the clergy. Our office, indeed, naturally tends to form us to a temper of devotion; but from the warmth of genuine devotion, superstition never can arise. On the contrary, it is plain from the nature of the dispositions themselves, as well as from the declarations of scripture, that reverence, and love of God, gratitude to him, submission to his providence, regard to his authority, and to his judgment of us, and

and all the other parts of real piety lead to universal virtue, and cannot be completed without producing it. All mankind appear to be sensible of this. They will allow a person to be really just or temperate, tho' some other virtues be plainly wanting in his character. But if a man want any virtue, and have an appearance of piety, they determine that his piety is insincere and hypocritical ; conscious that, if it were genuine, it could not fail to produce every moral virtue.— If men be apt to suspect the probity of those, who put on an extraordinary appearance of religion, their judgment may be easily accounted for. For it is too obvious to escape their notice, that real piety is attended with little show ; and it is an observation, which all men make in numberless other cases, that whenever a man affects any good quality, which he does not really possess, he is sure to overact his part. —But we need not dwell on this article of the charge ; for the author, instead of producing any evidence for it, indulges himself in remarks, which only tend to depreciate all religion, by confounding it with superstition. An examination of this point, though it be important in itself, is foreign to our present subject.

THE clergy have been often accused of *ambition*, and the accusation has been moulded into many different forms. This author chooses to represent them as a set of men, whose ambition can be satisfied, only

By promoting ignorance, and superstition, and implicit faith, and pious frauds, that, by arguments drawn from another world, they may move this world at their pleasure; whereas the ambition of other men may commonly be satisfied, by excelling in their particular profession, and thereby promoting the interests of society.— Is this a fair comparison of our character with that of others? Is it not plainly a comparison of laudable ambition in them, with the greatest corruption of that principle in us? But is the ambition of other men always of the praise-worthy kind? Is it this that has prompted individuals to raise themselves by supplanting better men, by fraud, by perfidy, by assassinations, by every the most shocking crime? Is it this that has distracted kingdoms with faction and rebellion, and filled the world with war and bloodshed? Will it be said, that the ambition of the laity has never appeared in this form, or produced these effects? And is not this the form of it, which ought, in just argument, to have been opposed to wrong turned ambition in a clergyman? On the other hand, will it be asserted, that our office does not suggest to us a laudable object of ambition, which will bear to be compared with the desires of others, to serve mankind, by excelling in their own professions? Our office, brethren, *naturally* proposes to us only one object of ambition, the noblest indeed that can be proposed, to be *workers together with God, and with Christ,*

Christ, in recommending *righteousness* to mankind (*m*), and thus promoting the most valuable interests of society. It is the *direct* end of our office, to excite mankind, by the discoveries of a future world, which reason and revelation make, to that conduct, which alone can promote the true happiness, both in time and in eternity. If we misapply these engines, to move men at our pleasure, or to render them subservient to our designs, we basely deviate from the end of our vocation, and, instead of it, pursue an opposite, an unworthy, and pernicious end. And shall that be imputed to our office, which is contradictory to its whole design?—But may not our office contribute, in some way to this conduct? Most men are prone to prefer present and temporal, to spiritual and eternal objects, and to pursue them by whatever means they can. Many, who were not of our order, have often prostituted religion, by making it a tool for promoting their secular ends. The vice is not, therefore, peculiar to our order. To be employed in the functions of our office will never lead a man to form these worldly designs, which can be accomplished by a prostitution of religion; these are suggested by the viciousness of his own temper, or by his being engaged in foreign occupations, and would not probably have been formed, if he had confined himself to his proper business. Indeed when ambitious views are, from

(*m*) 2 Cor. v. 20. 21. chap. vi. 1.

these causes, once formed by a clergyman, he will endeavour to promote them by those religious instruments, which his office affords, more readily than by any other others, because they are most directly in his eye. His office obliges him to apply them to the most glorious purpose ; this is an argument for its excellence : his wickedness prompts him to misapply them to bad purposes ; this is wholly his own fault. Ought the world to have been deprived of the only means by which virtue and happiness can be obtained, because the abuse of them may sometimes be pernicious ? This vice cannot, therefore, justly be imputed to the genius of our calling , for it has no primary or essential tendency to promote it ; on the contrary it has a very remote, indirect, and accidental influence upon it ; it will supply a temptation to it very seldom, never except by reason of the previous corruption either of individuals, or of the spirit of religion ; the vice will not be generally characteristical of our order, except in the most degenerate state of things ; on this account, and likewise because ambition often assumes the same form in the rest of mankind, and because other forms of it are equally detestible and pernicious, particular instances of clergymen applying religion to selfish or worldly purposes cannot, with any reason, render the character of the profession peculiarly odious. — If we promote ignorance, and superstition, and implicit faith, and pious frauds, for any end, we use the most unjustifiable means. But it is impossible,

impossible, that our office can, in the remotest manner, prompt us to use them. The method, by which its genuine end can be promoted, is the *manifestation of the truth* (n); our business is *rightly to divide the word of truth* (o) to all, to diffuse religious and moral knowledge to the utmost of our power. Is this the same with promoting ignorance and error? Say, all the world, is it not perfectly the reverse? Our office tends so directly to make us *apt to teach* (p), that it cannot even afford a temptation to the conduct of which we are accused, 'till it be first perverted to the very opposite of what it ought to be. It cannot put it in our power to pursue this conduct, except all the rest of mankind be, in one way or another, as degenerate as ourselves.— What then could lead a person to charge our office with a tendency, absolutely contradictory to its genuine spirit? There is one religion, the priests of which pursue this unnatural conduct. Christianity was gradually corrupted from its genuine purity, during several ages of ignorance and barbarity, by a mixture of the grossest absurdities of paganism. The monstrous medly could not bear examination, and, therefore, the priests of the *Romish* church betook themselves to the only means, by which it could be protected from contempt or indignation. But is it candid to transfer their character, to other

(n) 2 Cor. iv. 2. (o) 2 Tim. ii. 15. (p) 1 Tim. iii. 2.
2 Tim. ii. 24.

christian ministers, whose conduct is avowedly the contrary? This were to take it for granted, that priests of all religions are the same, not only *without* evidence, but really in *contradiction* to the evidence of actual experience. This character sprung, not from the office of teaching religion, but from mens having ceased to teach true religion: it can be ascribed only to those causes, which produced the corruption of religion; and, by that means necessarily changed the business of the sacred function, and reversed the natural character of the clergy.

IT is affirmed, likewise, that we lie under a peculiar temptation, from our office, to *vanity*, and an overweening conceit of ourselves, because we are regarded with veneration, and are even deemed sacred, by the ignorant multitude.—There are few situations, from which men may not take occasion for criminal vanity; for there are few, which do not give persons some real or imaginary advantage; and every opinion of advantage, however trivial, *may* produce an high conceit of ourselves. But the more important, or the more exalted any station is, the stronger its temptations to this vice. Our office has plainly very considerable dignity; the provinces of the philosopher and the orator are united in it; it is designed for the noblest end, for training men to virtue, and fitting them for eternal happiness. It is by its excellence alone, that it leads us to set a value on ourselves; and

and it has this tendency in common with every thing, which has any degree of worth.— But it is not every kind of self-esteem, that can be reckoned faulty. A just sense of any real and important advantage is not blamed in others, and cannot be blameable in us. It must be owned, however, that all men are very prone to an excess of pride, and very ready to express it in an improper manner. Vanity, ostentation, arrogance, insolence are highly censurable, both in ministers, and in others. But the censure is due solely to the individuals, who abuse the advantages of their situation, to foster these vices in their souls. The fault will be peculiarly chargeable on individuals in our profession, because it gives us strong inducements to avoid it. The very dignity of our office will fill a man of an ingenuous spirit with deep humility, when he compares it with his own unworthiness. *Who is sufficient for these things* (q)? Its functions will lead us to fix our thoughts often on the majesty of the divine nature; and, when we think of it, *what is man?* and *what is the son of man* (r)? And can we always avoid reflecting, that the humble and lowly Jesus (s) is our founder? If we cannot, will not his example have some tendency to form *this mind in us, which was also in him* (t)?—The principle of sympathy is very powerful. By means of it we enter into all the senti-

(q) 2 Cor. ii. 16.

(r) Psal. viii. 4.

(s) Mat. xi. 29.

(t) Philip. ii. 5.

ments of others. The good opinion of the world cannot fail to have a considerable influence on our judgment of ourselves. But have ministers of the gospel any peculiar security for veneration or respect? It is plain, that many professions are, in the general estimation of the world, more reputable than theirs. It will be difficult to point out any set of men, on whom greater reproach and contempt has been poured out, *for their work's sake*, than the teachers of religion. Undistinguished reflexions on this order are thrown out without reserve, and hearkened to with pleasure, by many, who would regard general censures of any other body in the gross, as an evidence of prejudice and ill-breeding. If, therefore, general reproach and ridicule have any tendency to mortify the vanity of mankind, the clergy, at least in the present age, are furnished with a peculiar antidote against vanity.——

All the veneration, which we can expect on account of our office, it is insinuated, is that of the ignorant multitude. We will not complain of the severity of this insinuation; we hope that our profession may give us a right, while we maintain a character becoming it, to the respect of the most knowing. It will prompt us more strongly to vanity, by this means; but if we allow that passion to have any other effect, than to give us a new reason for endeavouring to deserve their esteem, it will be wholly our own fault. If we cannot expect the esteem of the discerning, we can scarce have an irresistible temptation to vanity, from the veneration

neration of the ignorant, except we be formed very differently from all other men, who are most apt to be elated with the approbation of the most knowing judges. And, truly, in the present age, we cannot certainly obtain the veneration even of the ignorant; they, who oppose religion, or inveigh against its ministers, are formidable rivals to us. These are not generally like this author. His infidelity will probably rob him of some part of the attention and regard, which his philosophical genius, and taste would have otherwise commanded from the curious and intelligent. But almost all the rest owe their reputation solely to their irreligion, and must have been neglected or condemned, even by the most ignorant and careless reader, if they had attempted to write on any other subject.

OUR office is, also, censured, because it leads us to bear a *great regard* to the members of our own profession, and to have a *particular concern* for the interests of our own body.—But can this be culpable? Because our power to do good is very limited, because our beneficence would become useless, if it were dissipated equally among all mankind, God has wisely formed our constitution in such a manner, that benevolence rises in very different degrees towards different persons. The human heart is so strongly turned to love, that we eagerly take occasion for exercising a peculiar degree of this affection, not only from relation,
personal

personal qualities, or favours received, but also from more trivial circumstances, a name, a neighbourhood, or the like. This constitution of nature, necessarily leads men to love those of their own profession, and to be concerned for the interest of the society, to which they belong. Was this ever before censured as vicious? To neglect this were highly blameable. It is chiefly by particular kind affections, that men are linked together in society.— If the interests of clergymen of the same religion be really united more closely, than the interests of those of other professions, our office has a direct tendency, by this circumstance, to prompt us strongly to one species of benevolence and public spirit, and thus is peculiarly fit to promote one of the most amiable virtues. The interests of men of other professions not only are *distinct*, because each carries on his business apart, but often *interfere*, and by this means, the love, which they ought to bear to one another, is extinguished. Ought it not to be mentioned to the honour of our profession, instead of being objected to it, as a reproach, that it does not expose us to this danger?— All particular attachments may, indeed, be carried too far, and obstruct the exercise of other social virtues; love to a family may render a man negligent of the good of his country; even patriotism may make a man too careless about the interests of the kind. But is that constitution of our nature, which makes us capable of these attachments, to be blamed on this account? In like

like manner, if some clergymen pervert that just benevolence, which they owe to their society, into a narrow party-spirit, disposing them to sacrifice the interests of the laity, or leading them to aim at the support of their own peculiar tenets, or at the suppression of antagonists, instead of the *real* interest of the order, which always coincides with the interest of truth and virtue, and, by consequence, with the interest of mankind; is the office to be therefore censured? It gives occasion to this misconduct, only by containing a circumstance, which has a direct tendency to promote an amiable virtue, but which is capable of being abused by the folly or perverseness of men.—At the same time, our office tends strongly to prevent the abuses, which might arise from an excessive attachment to our own society. We teach a religion which represents us and all mankind as connected together by every endearing relation, which can excite the tenderest love, and by every similarity of condition, which can improve our love by sympathy and fellow-feeling. Our office sets frequently in our view the general connections of the children of men; and it unites us with mankind by peculiar ties. It interests us in their most important concerns, it engages us in the most affectionate intercourse with their very souls. Benevolence can be cherished only by those exercises of beneficence, for which the circumstances of men give opportunity. A minister has all the same opportunities of doing good, with another man;

man; and, if he really execute his office, he must have many peculiar to himself; for he can seldom spend a day, without being led to inform the ignorant, to comfort the distressed, to confirm the wavering, to cultivate the seeds of goodness in the minds of men. Such employment is certainly fit to melt the heart into love, and to make it to overflow, in streams of good-will to the whole human race.——When this author represented the clergy as a separate body, wholly unconnected with society, I am apt to think, that he had in his eye only one set of clergymen, those priests, whom the law of celibacy, and a monastic life cut off from all the ordinary relations to mankind. Indeed they are scarce a part of society, they have an *independent* interest, by which they are firmly united among themselves, by which they are often prompted to conspire in opposing the interest of society, and for promoting which their religion is evidently framed. But is it fair to ascribe a character, which springs from *peculiarities* in their situation, to clergymen of other professions, who are joined with society by all the same tender charities, with other men? To speak the truth, by means of these, the interest of individual clergymen is so much interwoven with that of the rest of mankind, that they are in considerable danger of bearing too *little* regard to the members of their own body, and of becoming the tools of the laity in promoting designs, which a concern for the interests of their own society *ought* to urge them to oppose.

IN the last place, the spirit of our profession is said to promote *impatience of contradiction, bigotted rancour, bitterness, and fury against antagonists.*—When we consider, brethren, the genius of the christian religion, as it is delineated in scripture, we can scarce expect to find this vice among either the ministers or the professors of it: for it is indeed *the gospel of peace* (u) its *end is charity* (v), its *spirit* is moderation and forbearance (x), it is wholly designed to root out of the hearts of men *all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, malice*, and to make them *kind, tender-hearted, forgiving, loving and benevolent* (y). Is it possible that the teachers of this religion can derive from their office a perfectly contrary spirit? If this office do not tend to sweeten the temper, and to give peculiar advantages for meekness, moderation, and humanity, it will be difficult to say, what are the proper means of cultivating these noble virtues.—The character and the office of a christian minister are described in scripture, as perfectly suitable to the benign spirit of his religion. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves* (z); *reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all LONGSUFFERING and doctrine* (a).

(u) Rom. x. 15. (v) 1 Tim. i. 5. (x) Luke ix. 54, 55, 56. (y) Eph. iv. 31, 32. chap. v. 1, 2. (z) 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. (a) chap. iv. 2.

This employment is so far from leading to the least degree of malevolence or wrath, that it cannot be executed aright, if we give any scope to this disposition.—But when we attend to the history of the christian church, we find it, in contradiction to the spirit of the gospel, filled with fierce contentions, often about trifles, producing angry zeal, and cruel persecutions on account of religious differences. Had these things been peculiar to the clergy, we might have regarded a temper of blind zeal, as a vice, to which our profession lays us under peculiar temptations, intended for our trial, which it will require our utmost vigilance to avoid complying with. Yet even in this case, we should have been able to evince that they are temptations, which reflect no real dishonour on the pastoral office, because they arise from a *perversion* of it. But indeed a spirit of bitter zeal has not been peculiar to the clergy; it has infected all ranks among the laity, in almost every age of the christian church. What has been the cause of this? And does not it affect the credit of the gospel itself? — In order to answer these questions, we may observe, that christianity, as it is exhibited in the scriptures, is a system, not of curious speculations, or intricate disputes, but of plain and simple facts, fit to affect the heart and influence the practice. It is proposed, not with a view to exercise the ingenuity of men, but expressly as *a doctrine according to godliness*; and it is represented in that manner, which fits it most
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for promoting this important end. As the principles of common sense, which the powerful hand of the God of nature has impressed indelibly upon the human soul, influence the actions of those, who have never made them an object of reflection or enquiry, in ordinary life ; so the principles of true religion, which the same God has revealed in the gospel, firmly embraced and thorowly digested, will exert their full force upon the religious and moral conduct of those, who are noways qualified to answer all the difficulties, or even to comprehend all the abstruse questions, that may be raised in relation to them. But men are prone to refinement on every subject, to nice disquisitions concerning the manner of things, and to contentions with those who receive not their theories, or advance others repugnant to them. Even the most obvious and irresistible dictates of common sense have been called in question by the subtlety of philosophers ; and, had nature left it in our power not to act upon them, till these disputes were determined, the most necessary functions of life would have been suspended, and immediate ruin would have ensued. Now, brethren, the christian religion has been treated like every thing else ; it has been made a subject of endless cavil and disputation. Men have set themselves to refine upon its simple tenets ; and, instead of representing it in a manner fit to operate upon the principles of action, they have reduced theology to a system of subtle controversies. We are so prone to
disputation,

disputation, that the greatest ignorance, to which mankind can be reduced, does not prevent it altogether. But the introduction of this evil into religion was immensely forwarded by the universal authority, obtained by that system of philosophy, which *Aristotle* had established, in declared opposition to all his predecessors, and which, in conformity to the spirit of its author, was wholly calculated for wrangling and altercation, and absolutely intolerating to all who opposed it. The spirit of this false philosophy diffused itself over religion, as well as over every other subject, filled it with innumerable subtle questions, and, by this means, rendered it unfit to influence the practice : for the manner of representing any doctrine, with a view to guard it studiously against the cavils of adversaries, will ever be very different from the manner, in which it must be represented, in order to move the heart. A system of principles of any kind, which spends itself in disputes, must be barren of works, and useless with respect to practice. It can produce only contentions, with all the fierce passions, that must needs attend them. Thus christianity has been perverted, by a false philosophy, from its real nature and design ; and from this perversion have arisen religious heats and animosities, and a bitter and persecuting spirit.

THE apostles foresaw this depravation of religion, and put both ministers and people on their guard
against

against it, warning them to *beware, lest any man should spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ* (b); not to give heed to *fables, which minister questions rather than godly edifying* (c); to avoid foolish and unlearned questions, knowing that they engender strifes and contentions, and are unprofitable and vain (d). And the apostle Paul intimates plainly, that they consent not to the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, who dote about questions, and logomachies, whereof cometh, envy, strifes, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds (e). But christians have not been so wise as to regard these warnings. They have deviated from the spirit of the gospel, they have corrupted it, into a disputatious theology, by foreign mixtures; and hence malevolent passions have arisen. But can they be imputed to the spirit of the gospel, when they have been introduced by men's contradicting its spirit? Can we be infected with them by teaching the gospel, when their cause is plainly teaching something else, instead of the gospel? They are a gross abuse of the gospel. But there is nothing incapable of being abused. They have been very frequent in the christian church. Perhaps God permitted them, for the exercise and probation of christians, that, as they have much greater advantages

(b) Col. ii. 8. (c) 1 Tim. i. 4. (d) 2 Tim. ii. 23.
Tit. iii. 9. (e) 1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

than other men, they might likewise have some peculiar temptations.——When *religious* disputes arise, they will naturally be managed with greater warmth, than questions on other subjects, by reason of their superior importance, and the conviction of each party that their sentiments alone are agreeable to the will of God. But this warmth will not be peculiar to the clergy ; the people will engage in the dispute with equal acrimony. If there be instances, in which the clergy have inflamed the people, it is certain too, that, in some instances, the clergy have been urged to fiery zeal, by the art of designing laymen ; and that, in some instances, they have laboured to curb the fury, and to cure the bigotry of the people, by illustrating and enforcing the principles of toleration and free enquiry. Nay, uncommon ardor seizes not the friends of religion alone, in questions where it is concerned, but the opposers of religion likewise. Warm-ed with the moment of the subject, they too urge their arguments without a strict regard to the rules of moderation. Is not the author, to whom we have so often referred, an example of it ? Would he have reasoned on any other subject, in the manner, in which he has reasoned concerning the character of the ministers of religion ? Had he been perfectly free from that zeal, which he imputes to us, and from the prejudice, which it occasions, I am persuaded, that his benevolence of heart would have rejected with indignation the general reflexions, which he has thrown
out

out against the clergy, and that his strength of understanding would have enabled him to perceive, that they prove nothing to the disadvantage of the pastoral office, or of the christian religion. Wrong-turned zeal has sometimes excited the clergy to call in the assistance of the secular arm for the suppression of their antagonists; is not this author, do you think, under the influence of some degree of the same spirit, when, in imitation of their conduct, he endeavours to alarm society against the attempts of the body of the clergy, as necessarily factious, ambitious and persecuting?—Thus the *odium theologicum* is not peculiar to priests, it arises not from the particular genius of their calling, the corrupt passions of all men often take occasion, from the importance of religion, to inflame it, in questions where religion is anyways concerned. Fully convinced of the truth of their own opinions, they are too apt to indulge intemperate zeal, under the appearance of the love of truth.— But have clergymen no temptations to this vice from which other men are free? Perhaps they have. If religion be already perverted, if the credit of peculiar tenets be substituted in the place of the interests of religion, which always coincide with the interests of virtue; they will, in that situation, but only in that, have a temptation to support their peculiar tenets with intemperate zeal, because their own credit and their livelihood will depend upon the belief, which their opinions meet with. But could either depend so much

much on this, if the people were not fired with a bigotted attachment to certain peculiar tenets, and disposed to desert or persecute the teachers, when they differ from them? Into the corruption of the people, therefore, that temptation must, in some measure, be ultimately resolved, which, on a superficial view, seems to arise from the pastoral office. In truth, religion is first corrupted through the weakness or wickedness of men; this corruption enters into the characters of all who profess it; both together pervert the pastoral office from its genuine spirit; and the perversion of it increases that corruption from which it sprung.—— If a man enter into the pastoral office fired with a spirit of disputation or wrong-turned zeal, the fault is chargeable only on his natural temper or his education. But if he enter into it without this spirit, the office will give him some advantages for avoiding it. It is acknowledged that, in other subjects, an acquaintance with the various opinions of learned men, and with the arguments by which each supports his own, tends to secure a man from unreasonable dogmatism. If it has the same tendency in religion, a clergyman must have an inducement to moderation, from his office. His office leads him also to study the scriptures, in which meekness and all the kindred virtues are enforced by every method, by examples, by precepts, by promises, and their opposite vices are exposed, prohibited, and severely threaten'd: and this surely has some tendency

dency to sweeten the temper and humanize the heart.

—In a word, my brethren, a spirit of bitter zeal springs not from religion, nor from the office of the teachers of religion, but from a corruption of both ; from a corruption, however, to which human nature is so prone, that it will require the greatest vigilance, both of ministers, and of the people, to preserve themselves from its infection.

I HOPE it is by this time evident, that this author has hastily thrown off a portrait for the ministers of religion, which does, by no means, express their genuine features ; and that the charge, which he brings against the spirit of our office, has been rendered in any degree plausible, only by fixing on some separate circumstances of our profession, by omitting some of their most natural effects upon the character, and by exaggerating the rest ; nay by ascribing circumstances to our office, which are not only foreign, but even repugnant to it ; by confounding the temptations, which may arise from the corruptions of it or of the gospel, with the direct and essential tendency of both ; and by comparing the highest degree of the vices, to which these temptations may solicit us, with the lowest degree of the vices, into which other men may be led by their particular situation. If the vices, to which clergymen are most exposed, be compared with the same degree of the vices to which men of other professions are liable, the former will not

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appear

appear to be more odious than the latter. It cannot be pretended that the peculiar temptations of the pastoral office are more generally complied with, than the common temptations of our earthly state or the peculiar temptations of other professions. There is, therefore, no reason for representing the character of the clergy as peculiarly disagreeable in comparison with other characters. There is still less reason for censuring the spirit of our office, or the gospel, by which it is instituted. In the preceeding enquiry, we have not dissembled any real temptation to the vices charged upon us, which can arise from our profession. But it has appeared that, whatever these temptations be, they arise from it only *secondarily* and *indirectly*; from the corruptions of our office, not from the office itself, whose *primary* and *prevailing* tendency is only to virtue. It has appeared, that, if our functions be performed aright, they will naturally and strongly promote sincere and manly piety, completed by universal virtue; and will lead to warm and diffusive benevolence, fit not only to check all angry passions, and all designs hurtful to mankind, but to prompt us likewise to uninterrupted assiduity in producing the happiness of others, by instilling the most important knowlege, and recommending the purest virtue.

IF this be the character, which the ministerial office tends to form in the several individuals of our society,

it will be unnecessary to prove, by any additional arguments, that no government can have reason to dread the attempts of the society itself, while its members retain the true spirit of their profession. As long as they are actuated by it, they must agree in considering all mankind as united into one great society, under the supreme government of God, and in regarding themselves as members of this system, connected with all the parts of it, employed to promote the order, and enforce the laws of this most ancient and universal polity, by doing their utmost to render all, to whom their influence can reach, wise and virtuous and happy. They must totally apostatize from this spirit, before they can form themselves into a *faction*, eager to establish any separate interest, any interest distinct from that of truth, goodness, and mankind. They must contract a spirit *opposite* to that which results from the *true* genius of their calling, before they can concur in giving scope to *ambition*, *pride*, or a *persecuting spirit*. Society can have no reason to be more jealous of their attempts, than of the attempts of any other class of men; for they are not more apt to degenerate from the virtuous spirit of their profession, and to promote faction or persecution, than other men are to become vicious, and to form designs, and to pursue measures, equally destructive of the peace and order of civil government. A peculiar jealousy of the clergy, and a desire to depress them, will always indicate a prevailing corruption of

manners, a disaffection to religion, an indifference about the practice of real virtue, and about the eternal happiness of mankind, in the societies or individuals, who entertain that jealousy.

IT was remarked, in the beginning of this discourse, that the enquiry, which we proposed for the subject of it, is of a very practical nature. It suggests important instructions, both to *ministers* and to the *people*.

1. EVERY part of the investigation, now attempted, forces reflections into our view, which merit the attention of all the ministers of the gospel. It shows us, my reverend fathers and brethren, both the *advantages* and the *difficulties* of our situation; both the strong *obligations* to virtue which we lie under, and the dangerous *temptations* to vice, to which we are exposed. By exhibiting the former it urges us, *seeing we have this ministry, not to faint (f)*, till we have attained that blameless holiness, which is so strictly incumbent on us. By discovering the latter, it warns us to *take heed to ourselves (g)* with the most constant vigilance, lest we be seduced by them.

THE office of a *bishop* is, indeed, a good, a worthy work (b). It has the strongest tendency to adorn the characters of those who exercise it, with universal holiness, the true beauty, the only excellence of the

(f) 2 Cor. iv. 1. (g) 1 Tim. iv. 16. (b) chap. iii. 1.

human

human soul. It gives us the noblest opportunities of saving ourselves, by doing all that we can to promote the salvation of others. The advantages, which we enjoy, demand from us the purest and the sublimest virtue. The voice of mankind, the nature of our office, the credit of our religion, call upon us to guard carefully against every sin, and to study to excell others in every amiable quality. In gratitude, in duty, in interest, in honour, by every possible tie, we are indispensibly obliged to be *blameless*, to have our souls deeply tinctured with all real goodness, and to render our whole lives an uninterrupted series of conspicuous holiness. Every degree of vice in us is singularly atrocious, not only in the opinion of the world, but in the eye of unbiassed reason, and in the unerring judgment of God; and will be punished with the greatest severity: and what would be esteemed only a defect of virtue in others, will ever be accounted a positive and heinous vice in us. In vain shall any minister of the gospel expect to derive esteem from the dignity of his calling, if he do not walk worthy of it. Its dignity arises from its holiness. A vicious minister will debase it more, in the opinion of the world, than all the groundless censures of its enemies. Nay, brethren, to our vices their reflections may justly be imputed; for our vices alone put it in their power to censure the genius of our profession, to revile our order, or to blaspheme the gospel for our sakes; our vices alone dispose mankind to listen, in any degree,

to their aspersions, or hinder them from rejecting them with indignation.

By improving the advantages, which our occupation gives us, we may, with the assistance of God, which will never be wanting to us but through our own fault, attain the highest degree of virtue: but by misimproving them, we shall sink into the lowest degeneracy. As meat, which is extremely nourishing to the healthful, may inflame dangerous distempers in the weak, so advantages for cultivating virtue, which have the most powerful influence on the well-disposed, will contribute to harden the wicked in their vices. The danger of our falling short of that exalted virtue which our advantages render indispensable, and the danger of our perishing for ever, which will necessarily spring from our falling short of it, have appeared so great to many pious persons of our profession, that they have not scrupled to express their fears, that a smaller proportion of our order, than of other ranks of men, shall obtain salvation. Certainly, we cannot be too careful to impress upon ourselves the deepest sense of both these dangers, which the strictness of our obligations and our signal advantages render very great. It is infinitely hazardous for a vicious man to enter into the pastoral office; it is infinitely hazardous for us to neglect the immediate application of its advantages to the improvement of our own hearts; for if the peculiar means of holiness, which it affords, do not
very

very quickly excite the ministers of the gospel to virtue, there is scarce a chance for their reformation. Where can they find means of reformation, more efficacious than those with which they have already refused to comply? It is of great importance, that every person, who aspires to this sacred office, should devote himself early to piety and virtue, that he may be qualified to improve its opportunities, and to avoid its dangers. It is of everlasting importance to his own soul. Every man who finds himself destitute of the seeds of exalted and uniform goodness, ought to relinquish all thoughts of engaging in a profession, to which his vices, of whatever kind they are, will be a reproach and ignominy. Whoever has entered into the pastoral office ought to give up himself to the practice of its duties, and, as much as possible, to confine himself to them, that he may not lose the advantages for cultivating virtue, which this office puts in his power. He ought to be extremely attentive to the manner in which he exercises his sacred functions, that he may avoid the heinous vice which will infallibly arise from the negligent or the improper exercise of them, and attain that improvement of heart, which will be promoted by the diligent and right performance of the duties of his holy calling.

SOME vices, as intemperance, impiety, excessive dissipation, are so unsuitable to our profession, that they will be indulged only by the abandoned; they de-

demonstrate a total depravation of heart, a mind lost to all the principles of goodness. In the most degenerate state of things, these vices will not be very frequent in our society; the least approach to them is universally reckoned scandalous. We should guard against these, because they will infallibly render our characters odious, and all our labours useless. However slightly they may be disapproved in others, let us remember, not only that they are highly blameable in their own nature, but also that the world will ever regard them with indignation in a clergyman, that even the perverted judgment of those who practise them, will pronounce them detestable in him, that even they who solicit him to commit them, and seem to like his gaiety, will despise him in their hearts. Let not the example or corrupted sentiments of the world, let not an affectation of spirit and freedom, let not the fear of being reckoned austere, morose, or stubborn, let not any inducement, prevail with us to admit the lowest degree of these vices into our character or practice. The virtues opposite to these are absolutely necessary to preserve us from universal infamy; let us take care that we have not the appearance of them only, but that we really possess the virtues themselves, and excell in them. They are enforced upon us by the spirit of our profession in its full strength; they are inculcated by *all* the moral principles, by which our employment operates on the temper.

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THERE are some other vices, which have not so *manifest* a repugnance to our profession, or which may even appear to spring from a common and probable abuse of it. But for that very reason, we have greater need to be upon our guard against them. Intemperate zeal, and its kindred vices will insinuate themselves more imperceptibly than those which were mentioned before, will disguise themselves more artfully, will more easily elude the observation of the ignorant, or, perhaps, will be even consecrated by them. In general, the vices, which we are in greatest danger of indulging, are those, which admit of the fairest pretexts, and which are most apt to be confounded with some virtuous principle; our profession does not afford all the motives to abstinence from these, which it affords to abstinence from other vices, though it affords all that their nature will allow. If we attend to the exhortations, which the inspired writers address to ministers of the gospel, we shall find that they much oftener give us warning against the vices of this class, than against others; thus plainly intimating that we are obnoxious chiefly to these. To avoid every degree of these will require the greatest circumspection. These will be more frequent in our society than other vices. These alone can, with any *plausibility*, be charged on the spirit of our office. If we indulge ourselves in these, their prevalence will furnish our more discerning enemies with the most specious arguments against us. Instead of entertaining resentment
against

against them, let us turn their censures to our own advantage. The ministerial office has not such a tendency to any vice, as can justly expose its spirit to reproach; but the vices which are imputed to it, may notwithstanding be those which a wicked or a careless minister will most probably indulge. Let us not be satisfied with a conviction, that our *office* does not deserve censure; but let every individual take care, that *he* may not deserve it. Adversaries of penetration will be sure to attack us on the side where we are weakest. Let us take warning; let us employ particular attention there; let us beware of every thing that can lead us into the vices which they impute to us. Our office has its peculiar temptations; let us not disguise them from ourselves; let us rather be solicitous to discover them: they cannot reflect dishonour on that office, or on religion; yet they may sometimes put our virtue to a very difficult and hazardous trial; they will overcome us, and seduce us into vice, if we be not vigilant and circumspect. But, if through the grace of God, whom we serve in the gospel, we strenuously resist them, we shall acquire strong habits of sincere piety, unfeigned humility, diffusive benevolence, meekness, gentleness, charity, and every amiable virtue, which can adorn our station, or our religion.

2. THE enquiry, in which we have been engaged, likewise suggests useful instructions to the laity.

IN the present age, and in this nation, infidelity has erected its standard, and many have enlisted in its service. If there be any among these, who think that they have rejected the gospel, after a fair examination of its evidences, we will pray fervently to God, that he may have mercy upon them, and bring them *to the knowledge of the truth* (i). We will beseech them, for their own sakes, to take care that they have been really *unprejudiced* in their enquiries. Prejudices *against* religion may insinuate themselves as imperceptibly, as prejudices *for* it; and they are, at least, as highly blameable. If God has really given a revelation of his will to mankind, every degree of unfairness in examining its evidence, will be highly vicious in the judgment of reason and natural conscience, and will evidently deserve the severest punishment. But, without pretending to judge of mens secret intentions, we may surely say, that when men attack religion, either in publick or private, either in conversation or from the press, by throwing out undistinguished reflexions against the clergy; when they exaggerate the failings of individual clergymen, and charge them on the whole body; when they attempt to reproach the spirit of the ministerial office, by partial or wrong representations of its nature; when they labour to overturn religion, by raising a groundless prejudice against the teachers of it; this affords a presumption of prejudice, though perhaps unsuspected by themselves,

(i) 1 Tim. ii. 4.

which,

which, when it is pointed out to them, may justly excite them to review the temper and care with which they have enquired into religion. If an infidel be not possessed with blameable prejudice, he will certainly confine himself, in his attacks against religion, to direct arguments, carefully avoiding every topic, which may weaken its *influence*, without deciding concerning its *truth*. Let illiberal reflexions against the clergy be left to the tribe of *vulgar* infidels, who have not perhaps penetration enough to discover, that they do not amount to a full confutation of christianity. Let those abstain from them, who are capable of perceiving, that many ministers may be extremely vicious, and yet the office which they hold may have a virtuous tendency, and the gospel may be true.

My subject leads me also to address the *christian* people. It leads me to warn you, my friends, not to allow any man to *beguile you with enticing words, by flight and cunning craftiness, whereby many lie in wait to deceive* (k). It leads me to *exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints; for there are many crept into christian countries, who deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ* (l). Let not example, let not inconclusive cavils, let not unsubstantial turns of wit, prevail with you to *deny the Lord that bought you* (m), in op-

(k) Col. ii. 4. Eph. iv. 14. (l) Jude iii. 4.
(m) 2 Pet. ii. 1.

position to your rational conviction. You may adopt some of the maxims of infidels, without perceiving their consequences; you may be infected with their *spirit*, while you reject their *principles*. This is shameful inconsistency; but every day's experience evinces that men may fall into it. Infidels have no prejudice against ministers of the gospel, except on account of their being the teachers of christianity; they reproach *them* only, that they may wound *religion*. But do not some of you join in despising, ridiculing, or reproaching the christian *ministry*, though you acknowledge the truth of the christian *religion*? The conduct of infidels is extremely foolish, because their reasoning is evidently fallacious. But your conduct is infinitely more absurd; you promote the designs of unbelievers against yourselves; you inconsiderately contribute to the success of a cause which you abhor. It has been often observed, that modern deists have derived from those very scriptures which they reject, juster opinions in natural religion, than the wisest heathens were able to form by unassisted reason; and that the gospel has thus insensibly refined the principles even of its enemies. But it may be observed with equal truth, that the prevalence of infidelity has greatly corrupted the *sentiments* and *practice* even of those whose *faith* it could not directly subvert. Be on your guard, therefore, against the contagion of its spirit.—Indeed, you have a right to expect exemplary holiness from your ministers; vice in them may justly excite your

indignation; and your expressing your disapprobation of it, in every proper manner, may prevent it from becoming frequent. Be sure, however, to find fault only with real vices. Confine your censures to the individuals who are guilty. In your censures even of them, remember still, that they are weak and fallible creatures like yourselves, exposed to all the temptations of this state of trial. But let not the faults of a few be imputed to all. Do not, on account of them, despise or reproach the office. Blame vicious ministers for behaving *unsuitably* to their profession; but remember, that this very judgment implies the *excellence* of that profession. While you believe the gospel, you ought to preserve a high regard for the office of teaching it; you ought to *esteem* those, who are employed in it, *very highly in love for their work's sake* (n). If you despise the *order* in general, you despise their *work*, you despise the *gospel*; for the gospel is both the source, and the subject of their employment. Is this consistent with your being christians?

You, brethren, as well as ministers, enjoy great advantages for the practice of holiness, by the gospel. Your obligations and your dangers are very similar to ours. It is your business to study and to practise that religion, which it is our business to teach and inculcate on you. Let your sense of the advantages, which it affords, animate you to blameless holiness. Let your sense of the danger of your misimproving

(n) 1 Thess. v. 13.

these advantages excite your vigilance and caution. In opposition to all temptations, *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (o)*; walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (p); let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ (q), which you have learned, which we have taught, and by which both you and we must be judged at last.

MAY God fill the hearts both of ministers, and of the people, with the true spirit of the gospel of Jesus, Amen.

(o) Eph. iv. 2. (p) Col. i. 10. (q) Philip. i. 27.

ERRATA.

Pag. 38. lin. 23. for *sentiments*, r. *sentiment*. Pag. 31. lin. 16. dele *that*. Pag. 88. lin. 2. after *many*, add *opportunities*. lin. 25. after *mankind* add, or *so much dependent on their favour*. Pag. 92. l. 9. for *antolering*, r. *intolerant*.

The Author's distance from the Press prevented the following Passages from coming in time to be inserted in their proper places.

NOTE to Page 60, line 1.

IT is plain from the most superficial view of the character, which Mr. *Hume* draws for christian ministers, that he avails himself of all the corruptions of character arising from the absurdities of *Popery* for blackening the clergy in general. I was unwilling, however, to suppose that he designed to represent the character of christian ministers, derived from their office, as the same with that character, which *heathen* priests would receive from their functions. I took it for granted, that this learned author was too well acquainted with antiquity not to know, that the Pagan priesthood was established on a very different footing from the christian ministry, and that the distinction between *clergy* and *laity* was never heard of in the heathen world. Candour induced me to believe that a person, who must know the purity and excellence of the religion and morality taught in the Scriptures, though he may not reckon it of divine original, could never entertain a thought of setting it on a level with Pagan superstition. I was disposed to ascribe those passages in his writings, which seemed to imply this, to an excess of zeal against those corruptions of true religion, which the weakness of men have too often introduced. I therefore intended the observations, which have been made above, concerning the difference between Paganism and Christianity, only for illustrating the general principle, that the nature of *all* religions is not perfectly the same, and that, by consequence, all religions cannot form precisely the same character in priests; a principle, which is immediately applied to prove the difference between the natural character of a popish Priest, and that of a protestant Clergyman. But in a late edition of
his

his *Essays*, which did not fall in my way till after the publication of the Sermon, this Author is solicitous to put it beyond doubt that he regards the heathen priesthood and the christian ministry as precisely the same office; from which it will be a necessary consequence, that Paganism and Christianity are, in his opinion, the very same religion. He makes this addition to his character of the clergy. "'Twas no bad expedient in the ROMANS, for preventing the strong effect of the priestly character, to make it a law that no one should be received into the Sacerdotal Office, till he was past fifty years of age, DION. Hal. lib. 1. The living a layman till that age, 'tis presumed, would be able to fix the character." Any person who reads this paragraph, would certainly think that *Dionysius* has asserted, that *Romulus* fixed the age of priests to fifty, as an expedient for preventing the strong effect of the same priestly character, which is delineated by Mr. Hume. But in truth, that historian does by no means represent the law of *Romulus* as an expedient for this purpose. He says, "While others generally chose the officers of religion in an improper manner, some selling the dignity, and some disposing of it by lot; he would not allow the priestly office either to be sold, or to be given by lot: on the contrary, he made a law, that out of every ward two should be chosen into the priesthood, above fifty years of age, who excelled the rest in virtue and nobility, who had a plentiful fortune, and were free from every bodily defect." DION. Hal. Ant. Rom. lib. 2. Mr. Hume's account of the intention of this law must, therefore, stand wholly on his own authority. But to what does that authority amount in the present case? When it is first proved that a prince, who, according to the account given of him by *Dionysius*, bestowed his first care on the establishment of the religion, with which he was acquainted, who reckoned a regard to it the principal

incipal mean of securing the prosperity of the nation, and who made larger provision for the priesthood, than the founders of any other states, yet believed that religion has an unfavourable influence on good morals: when it is proved that he foresaw that the priestly office tended necessarily to corrupt the character, and contrived this law on purpose to counteract this tendency, and to render the unavoidable corruption as *little* as possible; then Mr. *Hume's* account of the spirit of this law may be admitted as ingenious. But till all this be proved, it is a conjecture not only destitute of all plausibility, but even perfectly improbable.— A great degree of ingenuity, misguided by partiality to a favourite notion, has caused Mr. *Hume* to overlook the *obvious* reason of the *Roman* law. The religion of *Rome* was a political institution, and was constantly rendered subservient to the views of the leading men. The priesthood was an high dignity in the state, to which only patricians were admitted for a long time after the foundation of the city. A certain age was fixed for every magistracy; and the age of fifty was, in like manner, fixed for the priesthood, that it might be bestowed only on persons, who had served their country, and acquired authority in it. When the law in question is considered in this natural and obvious point of view, let any person determine, whether it can, in the least degree, confirm Mr. *Hume's* argument, or has the remotest connection with his subject.

NOTE to Page 95, at the end of the Paragraph.

Mr. *HUME*, far from discovering the fallacies of that reasoning, which induced him to draw so disagreeable a character of the clergy, or from softening that character on mature reflexion, which it had not been unreasonable to expect from his judgment and candour, has thought proper, in the last edition of his *essays*, to add *revenge* to the catalogue of vices with which he charges them. “ Revenge, says he, is a very natural passion

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" to mankind; but seems to reign with the greatest force in
 " priests and women : because being deprived of the immediate
 " exertion of anger, in violence and combat, they are apt to
 " fancy themselves despised on that account; and their pride
 " supports their vindictive disposition." I do not imagine that
 the author intends to throw any reflexion on women, by join-
 ing them with priests in this character; he rather intends to
 bestow plausibility on his charge against the clergy, by bringing
 that charge, at the same time, against women. A woman's
 revenge has become a proverb among those, who are desirous to
 propagate a disadvantageous character of that sex. An unwary
 reader, finding priests classed with women, may take it for
 granted that a vindictive temper is ascribed likewise to priests,
 by some trite maxim; and the supposed authority of that maxim
 will render him less ready to enquire, whether it be justly as-
 cribed to them. But the assertion, that revenge reigns with pe-
 culiar force in priests, is by no means evidently true. It has
 never, so far as I know, passed into a common saying; it is not
 here supported by any comparison of their conduct with that of
 others, in particular instances; and it would be very easy to
 shew that revenge has been as frequent, and as implacable in
 men of other professions as in clergymen. But as this author
 only infers the matter of fact, by reasoning from a circumstance
 in the situation of the clergy, his charge has no degree of proba-
 bility, except what it derives from the force of that reasoning.
 He lays the charge, it must be owned, with an uncommon dif-
 fidence; he had asserted boldly that the other vices *are* charac-
 teristical of the clergy; but he only says that this *seems* to belong
 to them. Yet his reasoning has not strength enough to bestow
 even the *appearance* of truth on his assertion. It will be found,
 on the most superficial examination, to be as weak as any argu-
 ment, which ever dropt from so able a philosopher. What is

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the reason, why revenge is strongest in priests and women? It is "because they are deprived of the immediate exertion of anger in violence and combat." It has hitherto been the unanimous opinion of philosophers, and the experience of all has seemed to confirm it, that the indulgence and exertion of any passion tends to strengthen it, and to render it habitual; and that *abstinence* from the exertion of it tends to weaken it, and can even wear out, by degrees, the most rooted habit of any vicious passion. In consequence of these acknowledged principles, all men would be apt to conclude, that priests and women being deprived of the exertion of anger in violence and combat, that passion, in all its forms, must be weakened in them more than in others. But this author has discovered, it seems, that all this is perfectly the reverse of truth. If to be restrained from the exertion of anger has really, as he affirms it has, a tendency to cherish a temper of revenge; it will necessarily follow, that the only proper method of weakening any passion is to exert it upon all occasions, and to satiate it with indulgence, and that abstinence from such exertion will infallibly strengthen it. Thus all the received maxims and rules of conduct will be perfectly inverted. Repeated acts must *weaken* every habit. A modest woman must acquire very strong sensual passions, for she is *deprived of the exertion of them*; and a common prostitute must have extremely weak desires. A temperate man must have a violent and constant craving for liquor, while the greatest drunkards have the least appetite for it. Such are the necessary consequences of this author's reasoning. But what is that particular exertion of anger, of which priests and women are deprived? The author seems to mean, that they are excluded from the privilege of *duelling*. Truly priests have not been always excluded from it. When duels were first introduced by the *Goths* and *Vandals*, churchmen were admitted to them; and many instances of priests engaged in single combat are recorded in history. Duelling

ling has been generally condemned by considerate persons; it has been supported by corrupt *fashion*, in opposition to *reason*; attempts have been sometimes made to palliate or extenuate its folly and its guilt; but few have gone so far as to endeavour to prove that it is altogether innocent. This author's reasoning, however, if it were just, would prove it to be not only *innocent*, but likewise highly *useful*. On his principles, it must be a powerful and absolutely necessary mean of moral culture; it alone can prevent a vindictive temper; all who are excluded from it, must become a prey to inveterate revenge. Strange that they alone should be deemed placable and forgiving, who scruple not to avenge the smallest appearance of offence, with the death of the offender! that a savage custom, unknown to the politest nations of antiquity, decried by all wise men, introduced in the most barbarous times, on purpose to *execute* and *satisfy* revenge, should, notwithstanding, be the only effectual instrument of *extinguishing* revenge! If we will not avow these consequences, we must admit that this author's reasoning is fallacious, and that his conclusion ought to have been the opposite of what it is: but these consequences who will avow?—But it is not only by preventing the exertion of anger, that their being excluded from violence and combat makes ~~revenge~~ *revenge* to reign with greatest force in priests and women. The author adds, "They are apt to fancy themselves despised on that account; and their pride supports their vindictive disposition." We readily acknowledge that pride supports any passion, with which it happens to coincide. But though we should allow that pride will be excited in this case, yet it has an opposite force to combat. We must be of opinion, notwithstanding Mr. *Hume's* authority, that abstinence from the exertion of anger has really a tendency to weaken anger. Pride must, therefore, have, not *some* tendency only.

only to support and strengthen anger, but a *greater* tendency to strengthen it, than abstinence has to weaken it, before it can produce the effect, which is here ascribed to it. There will, however, be no occasion to balance nicely these contrary forces against each other: for pride can scarce have any concern in the matter. Before pride can be engaged, persons must really fancy that they are despised on account of their being excluded from the privilege of combat. But combat must be very universal, before any person can apprehend contempt on this account: it can happen only, when all except priests and women are forward to insult and challenge; and when all are, moreover, either brutes or cowards, for such only will attack those, who are known to be unarmed and defenceless. In truth, however, a very small proportion of mankind ever think of exerting their anger in single combat. The far greatest part, therefore, can have no propensity to despise those, who are excluded from it; but all, who from any motives abstain from combat, must be as apt as priests and women to fancy themselves despised, to find their pride alarmed, and, by consequence, must be as much subject to a vindictive temper. In a word, priests and women run no peculiar risk of the contempt to which this author promises their capotes; their pride, therefore, cannot be naturally roused by their situation, in order to support revenge; without its being roused, their being deprived, in the words of the *Essay*, of the immediate exertion of anger will rather obstruct, than promote a vindictive disposition; they will escape this disposition, except more powerful causes, than those which we here suppose, contribute to produce it; and till much stronger evidence of the charge be produced, than any which arises from this author's reasoning, the voice of mankind will acquit them from any peculiar degree of a revengeful temper.

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